

2

Tatsunokotaru

竜ノ湖太郎 illustration ももこ

Last Embryo

再臨の
アヴ
ターラ

ラスト エンブryo

角川
スニーカー
文庫

Last Embryo - Volume 02

The Second Coming of Avatara

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2

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2

再臨のアヴァターラ



スカ
ハサ

アルスターの流儀を見せてあげなさい。

私のことは「世界王」もしくは
「クーちゃん」と呼び下さい。

せかいの
世界王
???

ベスト

お馬鹿じゃないの、
マイマスターは!?

私はちゃんと焰の勝利に賭けるぞ。

フリット
ガイ＝
マーゴ

はかせ
逆廻
十六夜

安心して寝てな。万倍返して殴り飛ばしてきてやる。

「よし、本題は此処からだ」

「先輩？人の話を聞いてますか？」





「そうだぞ社長」

「軍神様にしては随分と弱気な発言じゃねえか」



「久しぶりね」

「彩鳥も元気そうで何よりよ」



Last Embryo 2

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口絵・本文イラスト／ももこ

口絵・本文デザイン／百足屋ユウコ＋ナカムラナフシ
(ムシカゴグラフィクス)

Prologue

《Gift Game: Minotaur - The Throne in the Labyrinth》

List of contestants: Sakamaki Izayoi

Eligibility:

- 1) Owns at least one Sun Authority (Regardless of Ecliptic or Helios)**
- 2) Possessing direct lineage with a Sun Deity. Or has achievements related to the Sun.**

※Precautions※

The Sun Authority Preselection Game may be discontinued without notification. This is a precaution in every preselection games, please understand in advance.

Requirements for victory:

- 1) Suppress “The Monster of the Labyrinth”**
- 2) Elucidate Labrys’ maze, destroy every ox head.**

Oath: The Sun Authority War Operation Council pledges to hold the game fairly.

Second Sun Authority War Facilitators

“Laplace’s Little Demons”

Under the starry sky — lay a desolate, deserted labyrinth.

On the throne in the center of the labyrinth, a certain young maiden was trying to hold back her laughter. The girl was reading a “Geass Roll” that was made out of parchment. Although the contents of the “Geass Roll” remained unknown, it was certain that it contained something worth laughing over for her.

She stopped laughing for a moment as she composed herself. However, as she laid her eyes upon the text for a second time, she burst out in uncontrollable laughter yet again.

Having laughed at the same text for so many times, it was truly a blessing. However, from the outsider's perspective, there was nothing as sickening as that. If she wasn't beautiful, this action wouldn't be approved of.

Not to mention this big labyrinth was the home of that Bull Monster – The Minotaur's habitat.

There was no light nor signs of human activity, in the labyrinth the only sounds that could be heard were either from the wind or the insects. There was no end to the giggles from the girl. Her pearly white hair cloaked the back of her small petite body, despite her beautiful and neat appearance, her features resembled a maiden of a fairly young age. But her behaviour was no different from a town girl's.

The smile faded from her mouth, and once again she read the 'Geass Roll'.

This would have only resulted in an endless loop of laughter, however not this time.

A man who was sleeping in the shade quietly sat up. He must have been woken up by the girl's laughter. He ruffled his gorgeous hair as a wry smile spread across his face.

"Really... how many times have you read that, are you not satisfied yet,
World Dragon
Kurma ."

"What's wrong with it? It is not like there is any other entertainment here under this cold night. Then at least allow me to be excited for my playmate that's coming tomorrow, Bull Demon King."

The girl called World Dragon happily shook the 'Geass Roll'.

Compared to her lovely appearance she had quite a disturbing name.

The man known as the Bull Demon King, on the other hand, was also a striking man who would make one speechless.

With glossy black hair and a upright body figure, as well as a dominating pair

of horns. Bathing under the moonlight with that appearance, he exuded a ravishing male charm.

“Also, even if it’s trouble some, please call me the “World King”. My name still has to be kept a secret. Just call me “Kuu-chan” when I am in my human form.”

“Fine, I shall take you up on the offer and call you “Kuu-chan”, however you do know that your identity will be exposed sooner or later after the meeting with Taishakuten, right?”

“Taishakuten?.....Hm? I suppose you are referring to Indra. Actually, he might not even recognise me. He doesn’t know that I am a female dragon after all. Not to mention this is my first time in a human form.”

Plus, I am also very concerned about his reaction, the girl said it with a smile.

However, what’s more important was this, she held forward the ‘Geass Roll’.

“Rather than that, look! This, this! The Sun Authority Game this time is really in high standards! Previously, the contents of the game could only be won by someone who was foolishly strong!”

The girl who was claimed to be the World King started to walk in circles as she stated that “The last winner was a fool who relies solely on brute force.” The Bull Demon King nodded in agreement after reading the ‘Geass Roll’.

“Indeed. It was just recently that there was added second victory requirement, giving opportunity to those powerless ones. However, the difficulty of the trial has also risen in order to have a complement effect. This game of Labrys is also one of those. —So, has Kuu-chan solved the mystery?”

“Of course!”

Kuu-chan stood up immediately.

It seems that she just wanted someone to listen to her. Her eyes shone with a glorious look. Pointing to two words in the text on the parchment “Labyrinth”.

“First of all, I have some uneasiness with these contents, especially the victory conditions.

Requirements for victory:

1. Suppress “The Monster of the Labyrinth”

2. Elucidate Labrys’ Maze, destroy every ox head.

Like mentioned above, despite stating “Labyrinth”—it was expressly changed into “Maze” later. Despite its title being written as “Labyrinth”. The creator’s intentions are obscured.—By the way, Bull Demon King, do you know that “Labyrinth” and “Maze” have completely different concepts?”

Kuu-chan placed her slender finger against her delicate lips, becoming more and more satisfied.

The issue also seemed to have raised an interest in the Bull Demon King, who crossed his legs as he sat in front of the jade throne, and began to think.

“Hmmm... I remember, a ‘Maze’ is a “path forked with several different ways”, in contrast, a ‘Labyrinth’ is where “there’s only one way that will lead you to the end” It’s something like this right?”

“Although it was rough, but that’s not wrong. A maze is something that leads people astray, while the labyrinth’s goal is to confine people. In other words, a labyrinth has just one entrance and exit. Hence, being trapped in a ‘Labyrinth that one could never escape’ is a metaphor and is basically hinting that it’s a prison. —No, this has nothing to do with that now.”

Cough cough, Kuu-chan restored her composure and got back to the topic.

“The next thing I am concerned is on the line where it mentioned the ‘destruction of all ox heads’. From that point of view where it says the destruction of all, it’s possible to establish a hypothesis that there is more than one ox head. Thus, there’s no relation between that and the Minotaur itself. Causing people to associate with the ox head, yet with the existence of several of it, there’s nothing that’s contradictory about it....Alright, do you understand now, Bull Demon King? As the great monster of the bulls, you should’ve gotten some clue right?”

The dragon girl exposed a provocative smile.

The Bull Demon King deliberately folded his arms in front of his chest as he

revealed signs of trouble.

“I don’t actually understand most of the part that you have said..... But according to your explanation, the ox heads should be non-living things. Not referring to Minotaur, but the ox heads itself.”

Bull Demon King looked around. The labyrinth was severely damaged and there were rubbles scattered all over the ground. As he saw the weapons and decorations that had fallen onto the ground, he clapped his hand in a flash of light.

“So that was it! It was the ‘Labrys’!”^[1]

“Hehe, looks like your gray cells finally woke up. I shall too slowly become more active. That’s right, the double-edged axe whose name originates from the Greek word of Labyrinth, the Labrys! Since it was originally a ox head shaped weapon that was used to represent the Minotaur, it was also an equipment during a sacrificial ceremony. In the Knossos palace, which is a prototype of the labyrinth, there were dozens of those double-edged axe marked on the wall. —Hehe, you should’ve understood by now, right?”

——Ox heads were depicted everywhere on the labyrinth walls.

Reaching this point, the Bull Demon King finally nodded, understanding the violent damage in the surroundings.

“So this is why....! After destroying the axes that were on the walls of the labyrinth, it automatically makes another route, as a result, this caused the ‘labyrinth’ to become a ‘maze’!”

“Good! Right, that’s exactly it!”

Kuu-chan and the Bull Demon King point out their index fingers as they reveal the answer.

She pointed towards labyrinth that was heavily destroyed and jumped in excitement.

“This contestant named Sakamaki Izayoi must also have solved this game’s puzzle! The traces left behind through the sight of this irregularly destroyed labyrinth aren’t the traces of battle, but the traces of clearing it!”

Holding the 'Geass roll', Kuu-chan looked towards the moonlit night as she spun happily.

"Hehe... What kind of young man is he? Challenging this wicked game, he must be one clever kid, wouldn't he? I can't wait to play with him. You too, right?"

"I fully agree with that. I am also looking forward to meeting Izayoi. How much have those bastards grown?"

Bull Demon King muttered earnestly with traces of intimacy felt in it. There was no knowing just what kind of emotions those words contained.

However, as he too looked towards the moon, his line of sight was turned gentle.

"....But, the children from Canaria's Home have also been involved into this despite our countless efforts to not result to this."

"Ara, yet you simply agreed to join us."

"Well, the buddhists did sent their men over after all. It's okay if it was Shiroyasha, but I have no interest to get along with Taishakuten. There will definitely be a day, where in the match between me and him, there will emerge a victor."

"Oh is that so? Just how many enemies does that guy have...? Ah Ah, that's right. Speaking of Indra, I heard there was a teenager that shares a biological relationship with him."

The little girl smiled and put a finger to her lips as she looked towards another comrade resting under the shade. Although the distance was too far which caused the sight to not be clear, but one could definitely see the blue hair as if clad in lightning.

Was he asleep? Or was he faking it as he didn't want to join the conversation. As the Bull Demon King and the World King put their line of sight onto him, they shook their head.

"When you live long enough, there's always something unexpected. I had never thought that he would join our side. Even though he is by no means a

Demon Lord.”

“On the contrary, he is one of the leading great heros from Indian Pantheon. If he’s willing to become a player, since I am a Sponsor, my reputation will be raised quite a bit. Which basically means that the victor of this Authority War would definitely be us ‘Avatära’.Hehe, what kind of face will Indra have after seeing him, I am definitely looking forward to it.”

“...How sinister of you. No matter how you imagine it, there’s only negative impact towards him.”

“Is it? I instead doubt there’s even a chance that he would understand and forgive. That is to say, if he’s still the same Indra I know that is.”

World King

Kuu-chan puffed her small chest as she spoke proudly.

Although the Bull Demon King did not reply, but from his action of shrugging, it looked like he questioned her words. Indra she mentioned was from the time he was partly an evil god, but the current Taishakuten was a benevolent deity that protected buddhism. Bull Demon King felt that if he were to meet a relative who had sided with the demons, a conflict was inevitable.

“Well, It doesn’t matter. I will keep Izayoi and Homura a company. This time, I ask that you don’t interfere this time, Kuu-chan-dono.”

“That’s okay. Don’t look at me like this, I am actually very patient!”

Kuu-chan acknowledged it while energetically raising her hands.

Yet, as she read through the “Geass Roll” again, she laughed pleasantly once again.

The Bull Demon King shook his head as if he couldn’t stand it, returned to the shade, and waited for the challenger’s return to the labyrinth.

1 Λάβρυς (Lábrys) is a double-bitted axe which you must have seen in pretty much every RPG, and no this is not a weapon. It was the symbol of the Goddess da-pu2-ri-to-jo-po-ti-ni-ja (labyrinthioio potnia, Mistress of the labyrinth). ↩

Chapter 1

The sky of the Mediterranean Sea had an impeccably clear weather.

The shaking caused by the ferry as it was dashing through the sea while scattering the water was a little on the rough side, however the blue sky and the beautiful sea didn't let them worry about the discomfort of riding.

The transparent-looking Mediterranean Sea and salty breeze were utmostly pleasant for sightseeing. The scenery which could be said to be a pride of the natural world had quite a bit of resemblance to another world.

As it was the middle of Golden Week in Japan, there appeared to be many Japanese among the tourists. There were many people like families and lovers who were enjoying themselves on the foreshore beach.

However, it wasn't just a bright side that could be seen between the Greece airport and the ferry boarding place. The scars that the extra-large Typhoon, "Bull of Heaven" left while passing by were severe, and there were blockaded areas along the coast as well. The palm trees that towered from high above, were bent to the right, and the olives that still bore green fruit were completely scattered all over the ground and trampled on to the point that it was painful to even look at it.

The small boat for private loaning was damaged to the point that sailing on it was impossible.

On top of that, the mysterious virus that caused the pathology that was partly similar to the smallpox was also confirmed. Since it was an incident from a few weeks ago, it was still a scar that was yet to be healed for the citizens.

Sakamaki Izayoi, Mikado Tokuteru, and Prith wondered if there really was anyone who would lend them a boat in such circumstances— However, that was that, and business was business.

The great principle of 'those who don't work, don't eat' was unchanged no matter the times. Even in such a state of emergency there was no way they

would lose a customer who wanted to board a ship and offered a large sum of money.

And fortunately, hearing that a friend of “Don Bruno” manager was doing a business of boat loaning, the three of them had gained the means to head towards the solitary island floating in the Hellenic Republic – the island of Crete.

As Prith asked for the details of how Izayoi arrived from another world once more, she widened her eyes from surprise as she listened to him.

“Then what? Are you saying that when you were participating in a Minotaur Game, it was suddenly interrupted?”

“That’s right. Originally, I wanted to gather Sun Authorities in order to proceed advantageously in the Sun Authority War. But it seems the interruption came from the Game’s Host.”

And I had the Game almost solved as well, Izayoi folded his arms in displeasure.

The Sun Authority War – A Gift Game of Little Garden where people fought for the twenty four Sun Authorities.

Within the “Twelve Ecliptic Constellations”, the twelve Celestial Beasts consisted of: “Aries”, “Taurus”, “Gemini”, “Cancer”, “Leo”, “Virgo”, “Libra”, “Scorpio”, “Sagittarius”, “Capricorn”, “Aquarius” and “Pisces”.

And within the “Twelve Chén of the Equator”: “Mouse”, “Ox”, “Tiger”, “Rabbit”, “Dragon”, “Snake”, “Horse”, “Goat”, “Monkey”, “Rooster”, “Dog” and “Pig”.

These twenty-four Celestial Beasts that existed within the Sun’s Orbit, were generally referred to as the Sun Authorities.

There was still time before the final selection and it was still just a preliminary stage at the moment, but there were quite a bit of participants who intended to increase their Sun Authorities even by one until the final selection.

Sakamaki Izayoi’s community that was among the favorites was also one of them.

“Ah, look. Didn’t Shiroyasha release more than half of her Sun Authorities in

order to take the initiative in making rules? That led to the increase in the struggles and competitions. Haven't you heard that?"

"No, first time hearing it.But, I see. If Shiroyasha who was the former winner, released the Sun Authorities, then there must be quite a few of them roaming around, huh."

The former winner – also called as the "King of the White Night" – the Celestial Spirit governing the movement of the sun, had been selected as the production and performance committee chairman of the Game. This also served as a declaration that a former winner wouldn't be participating in the contest. That was probably a good news for the warriors who were aiming for the championship.

Sakamaki Izayoi and Prith were leaning on the deck fence of the traveling boat, and gazing at the horizon of the Mediterranean Sea.

"But with that in mind, it will be even more troubling if you weren't returned to Little Garden soon. I'm concerned that if the Sun Authority was abused, the damage would spread beyond the Authority War. Although I have made an excuse before the dispatch, please spare me from using my paid vacation any more than this."

".....What, so you are using your paid vacation? What happened to your dependable president?"

"President is unrelated to this. Because I'm working as an attendant and bodyguard of the young lady of "Everything Company". I have sent the vacation request towards that side. —Speaking of which, I expect that Ayato-ojousama would be coming to spend the Golden Week overseas with me."

Added Prith while putting a hand to her chest.

While Izayoi wasn't too knowledgeable of the circumstances, he understood just from the context that she was someone capable.

"Hmm. If you have such deep connections to "Everything Company" wouldn't it be better if you just used those means to hire a boat?"

"Don't be absurd. If they found out that Ojousama wasn't with me, it would become troublesome, you know? So let's just depend on Don Bruno's

connections this time.”

To Prith who gave a mature smile, Izayoi replied with a shrug.

“Well, not that I mind. At any rate ‘what you should have is foreign friends’ means exactly this. I just tried depending on Don’s friends since there was nothing to lose anyway, but it seems I hit the bull’s-eye this time. Thanks to that, we don’t have to swim to Crete.”

“Indeed. Just being swayed by the waves is fine, but I’m fundamentally weak against the sea.”

“Eh? Now that’s an unexpected weak point. Then, how did the great Prithvi plan to cross the sea in case we didn’t find the boat?”

Izayoi asked a little teasingly while revealing a frivolous smile.

For her who had a calm atmosphere with no gaps in it, this was quite a plain weakness. Izayoi probably tried to make her a bit embarrassed with the intentions to deepen their friendship.

However, the woman in question had a suit coat hung over her shoulder without showing a hint of being troubled.

While looking strangely puzzled, she curtly announced.

“Even if you ask me how.....wouldn’t be fine if I just fill up the sea and cross it?”

“..... Hou?”

—I see. I see, so it came.

This damn benevolent goddess, planning to fill up the world’s one and only Mediterranean Sea, huh?

Still, I see, so there was also that method, huh, Izayoi showed his admiration. He surely saw her in a new light now.

Putting the words that she said to the test, she pointed at the distant north, “Look, if I threw the mountain of that island into the sea, wouldn’t it be just right to fill it up? Or maybe cut the whole island?” and seriously considered such things. Furthermore, if she was seriously saying that, then as expected,

even Izayoi had to stop her. He would be troubled if even the place of outer world that he hadn't visited was flattened.

While Mikado Tokuteru sat on a chair that was arranged on the ferry deck, he released a perplexed sigh.

"Hey, you barbarians. Don't just judge everything by the standards of Little Garden. Also, Prith, Mount Athos is designated as a sacred place, so don't do such reckless things. It wouldn't be good to make enemies out of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the outer world^[1]."

Saying that with a look of amazement, Tokuteru stared at the international economic newspaper he had in one hand and also the damage information reflected on the screen of his phone.

Although it was still covered up by the newspaper, the effects of the virus were steadily becoming an issue. There were only a few humans who were aware of the fact that it was infecting wheat and corn, however you can't stop the rumors from spreading. In Europe in particular, the wheat flour already showed the signs of a price jump. As Tokuteru glared at the page with a bitter expression, Izayoi who got behind him, read it and also grimaced.

Izayoi traced the top article of the front page with his finger.

"Sudden price jump of wheat flour by 55% in France.....? Damn, this is terrible. Would it be fine? My image of French people is that they would die if they can't eat bread."

"That's an awful prejudice..... or so I would like to say, but it's not really off the mark. In any case, France is the major agricultural country with farming territories taking a bit less than 60% of its territory. It can also be said that it accounts for one fourth of the crops produced in Europe. I don't know up to what part of France has the disease been spread, but it would become a world panic at this rate."

Mikado Tokuteru plainly spoke the words that stirred up their anxiety.

Typhoon, the "Bull of Heaven", had indeed crossed half of the world and had appeared in Tokyo. And its scars left more harm than what was visible to the eye. It was still unknown what percentage of the saved-up grains was spoiled.

There should only be a few farmers who had grasped the fact that the virus stayed at the farming areas. It was speculated that the fact that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization had not announced these abnormal situation was because they were searching for a way to deal with the confusion that would come after it.

However, Tokuteru was not a bit flustered before such abnormal circumstances.

Rather, he was even composed.

As if Izayoi remembered something from his attitude, he asked while showing a frivolous smile.

“Hey, Tokuteru. Isn’t it about time you told me?”

“Told you what?”

“Don’t play dumb. The abnormal situation of this time is unmistakably world class. After all, the Twelve Guardian Devas who take the name of the strongest War Gods, have two people taking human form to monitor the situation. And yet, both of you are simply taking a wait and see approach. If you two so felt like it, you should be able to settle an abnormal situation of this level in your spare time.Isn’t that right? Pṛthvī Mātā ?”

Izayoi directed his gaze towards Prith while revealing a smile.

She, whose God Name was called, hung the coat on her shoulder and smiled wryly.

“Now, I wonder about that. This place is quite separated from my land, and among the Heavenly Army..... “Devas”, this place is in the jurisdiction of the Greek Pantheon. When the things are heated up by the Sun Authority War, I don’t want to do something like treating another person’s domain.”

“There’s also that, but if a Mother Earth Goddess like Prith were to poorly mess with this area, there’s a risk of coming in contact with the seal of the Divine Titans. It wouldn’t be nice if the Titan tribe was resurrected in the present times now, would it?”

Two good deities revealed a dodging smile and talked evasively.

To tell the truth, both of them have already seen the conclusion of this matter.

The project team of Hōei Academy where Homura belonged— Until the usefulness of the medical Nanomachines that the large trading company of Western Europe, “Everything Company” invented was confirmed, this unstable situation would continue.

If it came to be that the Nanomachines that Homura took part in creating excise such rampant disease damage, they will certainly become internationally known. In the end, you can see that historical record “the world economy was saved by the Nanomachines created by Saigou Homura” has already been set in stone.

Based on this international contribution, it seemed that the research and development of the Nanomachines that he researched – the “Star Particle Bodies” would be greatly promoted.

“Well, I can’t explain the detailed circumstances, but it can be considered as a pre-established harmony up until this point. This era shouldn’t receive a major change from Little Garden. Since the events that are supposed to happen are heading towards the desired conclusion, your return to Little Garden takes priority.”

“.....Hmm. I see, so you are leaving me out of it?”

Izayoi glared at Mikado with even more dissatisfaction. That situation looked as if despite knowing that there was an interesting game going on, he was made to keep away. He didn’t seem like someone who was soon to reach adulthood.

The two Divine Spirits suppressed their laughter while looking at that state— But they were a little naive. If he was someone who would pull back with just this much, then he wouldn’t have been summoned to Little Garden.

Izayoi who floated a frivolous and evil smile, took out a mobile phone and began to send a mail to someone.

“Well, that’s fine. If the source is the virus, then even I have the means to acquire the information. After all, the serpent staff is currently in our possession.”

“.....Huh? Hey wait a minute, what are you planning.”

“It’s a secret, secret. We’ll arrive at Crete soon. Since it’s the Minotaur’s birth land, there should be some clues there. I have to meet them quickly, the safety of the chibi bunch is on my mind, you see.”

Yahaha, Laughed Izayoi and turned his back to the two.

Tokuteru folded the newspaper and phone, stood up and laughed sarcastically.

“What? So you are worried about Homura and others, after all?”

“It’s a little different from worry. In the first place, those guys aren’t ones to be summoned to the Little Garden. They do hold the Gift-like powers, however even that’s not much. I don’t know what Queen was thinking to have involved them in this, but it’s impossible to win a Gift Game with Homura and Suzuka’s powers.”

In a word, he was like a victim who was involved on a whim. Izayoi concluded that he wasn’t a person who should participate in Gift Games.

However Tokuteru reflexively knit his brows from his careless remark.

“That’s..... quite a big remark. Isn’t that evaluation a bit too lacking considering it’s you? I think both Homura and Suzuka are quite good, considering they are humans.”

“Is that so? Even if you look at them from the perspective of War God-sama?”

“Of course. Perhaps they were perplexed at first, but given those two, I’m sure that they already understood how to get around Gift Games. Unexpectedly, those three might have already started to take action towards clearing the Game, you know?”

Tokuteru replied to Izayoi with words that contained hidden meanings.

Three people, to put it another way, it was an evaluation that included Ayato.

However, Izayoi who didn’t know about her, shrugged his shoulders with puzzled expression.

“Hmm.....At any rate, our opinions differ regarding those two. Suzuka aside,

Homura has only held a reserved and passive atmosphere ever since he was a kid.”

“You fool. Humans grow up. Ever since you left, it was Homura and Suzuka who kept protecting the “Canaria Family Home”. It’s also given that he would become strong.”

Mikado Tokuteru criticized Izayoi with a glare loaded with some irritation.

Although it is said that children grow even without parent, it was difficult for the current Izayoi who hasn’t even become an adult to actually understand that feeling. Because for him, Saigou Homura and Ayazato Suzuka had their times stopped as ten-years-old kids.

To Izayoi who found it difficult to agree with him, Prith told in a pleasant manner.

“Is that so? Then, how about a bet?”

“A bet? What kind?”

“About the outcome of the Gift Game. Tokuteru thinks they would win, and Izayoi thinks they would be defeated, right? It’s a rare difference of opinions, so wouldn’t it be wasteful if we didn’t bet on it?”

Prith rolled up ten 100 dollar bills that she just converted from her purse, and showed it to Izayoi while playing with her fingers with it. It appears that she herself wants to take the opportunity to bet.

Izayoi who reflexively accepted it looked sullen for a bit, but turning back to a challenge wasn’t in his nature. Izayoi who changed into a frivolous smile in one go, took out a gold coin issued by the “Thousand Eyes” from his breast pocket.

Mikado whose odds were increased by five times, was greatly surprised.

“Hey hey hey, wait a minute you two! Even if you want to bet, aren’t your stakes a bit too high!?”

“Really now? Isn’t that statement a bit too frail to be coming from a War God-sama?”

“That’s right, President. If you are a man, I wish you’d at least generously throw in your wallet.”

Tokuteru was forced to gamble by the two, however there wasn't that much money in his wallet. It was at most ten percent of the presented amount.

Although he vigorously said so a while ago, as expected, he didn't think that Homura's company alone could win a Gift Game. In order for them to win, they would need Izayoi or Tokuteru to come to their aid.

However if he were to turn them down here, the two would undoubtedly ridicule him as "The Strongest War God (LOL)" even more. Only that he had to avoid. As a Chief God, as a President and as a man.

Sometimes, it is also the obligation of a boss to spend money in order to protect his dignity.

Tokuteru who took out his mostly empty wallet, suppressed his inner anxiety, and responded with a somewhat daring smile.

".....Fine then. If you say that much, I'll take the bet. You'll be crying later, you shitty brat."

"Oh really? Aren't you faltering a bit too much compared to your vigorous speech? I surely thought that you gave your money to a woman from Kabukichō, and were full of debts, you know?"

"Hey hey, stop saying such foolish things. Don't ever threaten a married person like that even as a joke. Isn't that exceptionally effective? What are you going to do if it was overheard, please save me from that. It's not like I was lured by the deal that I could take everything from dealer if I won or anyth—"

"Hm? No wait a minute. I honestly believe in Homura's victory."

—*Huh?* The two directed surprised gazes at Prith. They probably didn't expect that someone with good reasoning like her would bet on a clearly disadvantageous side.

However, she didn't appear to be afraid.

While floating a gently smile, Prith rolled up even more banknotes.

"We can raise it up if you like. Shall we also attack conditions, Izayoi?"

"No..... There's no need for that. But are you really serious?"

“I am serious. I wouldn’t offer it if I didn’t have any chances of winning. isn’t that right, Tokuteru. You of all people should know that I wouldn’t bet on anyone other than those I see potential in, right?”

Prith added on the bet while smiling widely.

It was just at that moment when they reached the harbor. Prith turned her back on the two men with light steps, and went out first while waving her hand.

Izayoi looked dubiously at Tokuteru.

“.....What’s up with you two. Did you actually bestow a Gift upon Homura?”

“No, there’s nothing of the sort..... But, oh dear, that surprised me, Izayoi. Perhaps with this, perhaps it might really happen.”

Tokuteru vigorously stood up and took the luggage in hands.

On his lips was etched a smile of enjoyment unlike any so far.

As for why, it was because Indra knew.

The Divine Spirit of Agriculture – the Great Mother Goddess of the origin of civilization, Pṛthvī Mātā, in a distant past, had once volunteered to be a guardian of two warriors. Both achieved such success that their names resounded throughout the world, they were seen as great men, great enough to give rise to an epoch.

The first became the King of the Gods.

The second the Vessel of the King of the World.

And now, she left behind words that implied that Homura would become the third one. What could this mean? —This suddenly became enjoyable.

(If it means that Homura would follow our steps, then it would be troubling were he to fail in such a Game. Let’s have you do your best.)

Although Tokuteru protected them for five years, his evaluation of Homura’s talent was still pending.

Thinking back that it was a good opportunity to ascertain Saigou Homura’s ability, they stepped foot upon the solitary island of Greece – Crete.

1 Ἄθως (Athos) is a very important place for Eastern Orthodox. It is the home of 20 monasteries under the direct jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. To enter you need a diamonētērion (διαμονητήριο), which is a visa signed by four of the secretaries of the leading monasteries. It is forbidden for women and most female animals.

↩

Chapter 2

—Aquatic City “Underwood” of the Great Tree and Waterfall.

The thunderously blowing wind hit the trunk of the Great Tree.

The clear stream of Aquatic City had been completely changed to a muddy one by the raging storm, and it had started to engulf the residential area around it. In this Great Tree city of “Underwood” where the surrounding lands were continuous plains, the buildings structures weren’t made for withstanding the Typhoon.

In short, most of the buildings were made of typical brickwork.

The breakwaters for the rising water were established, but that was not the only thing to be defended from.

If the source of the raging storm—the “Bull of Heaven” remained like this, then the Aquatic City that had just been revived would undoubtedly receive huge damage.

Kudou Ayato who was watching over the city’s state from the room that was in the Great Tree’s trunk, sighed anxiously.

Ayato turned towards the girl one year older than her, Ayazato Suzuka, and muttered.

“.....It’s a terrible storm isn’t it, Suzuka?”

“Quite so. If I remember correctly, with the final record in our world, the wind speed reached up to 109 meters. Something about it being the greatest and the worst raging storm in history.”

While responding with agreement, Suzuka was absorbed in reading on top of straw-thatched bad. Three days had already passed since they came to “Underwood”, but the situation was like this.

It was good that she wasn’t panicking in this situation.....but honestly speaking, it would’ve been easier to reconcile if she was a bit more confused

and anxious. Rather than her nature, this was just the difference of their courage.

As far as Ayato knew, Suzuka fundamentally never trembled with fear no matter what the situation was. In particular, if people younger than her were watching her, then she would probably act brave even in the face of adversity.

Ayato prayed she wouldn't do anything reckless—but rather than her, the problem was with Saigou Homura.

As Ayato released a small sigh, this time she looked towards Saigou Homura who was also in the same room.

“.....Um, Senpai.”

“Yea?”

“That.....isn't it about time to focus on mobilization? Both you and Suzuka have been doing nothing but reading for the past three days.....”

“Well, even if we move now, it wouldn't do any good, after all. Until preparations are done, we have no choice but to stay within “Underwood”.”

Saigou Homura looked at the ceiling as he turned around.

After his contact was cut with Izayoi—Homura was fueled by “Queen Halloween” for genuine participation in the Game, but he didn't reply immediately, as expected. He announced that he wouldn't reply until he confirmed her words in his own way, and here he was now after postponing it.

(Though I said that, I can't bring trouble to “Underwood” forever. It would be bad if I don't make up my mind soon, huh?)

This Gift Game was not unrelated to Saigou Homura. However, whether that was related to his motivation or not, was difficult to say. The only reason Saigou Homura started to research the ‘Star Particle Bodies’ was nothing more than what he needed to in order to survive in real life, so inevitably, in the order of priority, things like his parents' will or revenge was low.

However, as a matter of fact, there was one enemy in his mind, that fulfilled Queen's conditions.

(The first guardian..... it's before I came to “Canaria Family Home”, so was it

about eleven years ago I guess? When I met that man.)

Aside from Saigou Homura, those who had a chance to take part in “Star Particle Bodies” were only the researchers from “Everything Company” and that man who was their successor.

It would difficult to say unless he investigated it once, as to what had become of that man and what he was doing.

Putting an open book on top of his face, Homura’s consciousness sank into the sea of thoughts.

*

Eleven years ago—it was before he was adopted by “Canaria Family Home”.

Saigou Homura used to live with a certain man.

As Homura’s parents funeral was quietly performed, the two of them had no relatives, so he was adopted by one of the researchers who took part in his father’s research. Homura couldn’t even remember how he looked after all this time, but he remembered that he was a youth with burning ambition. The reason why he adopted Homura was probably because he desired the data of Star Particle Bodies researched by his father.

At this point, it wasn’t certain whether that man took the thesis or particle bodies or not. But for the young Homura, there was no better environment for “learning things”.

Homura who was mostly free to do as he wanted, freely touched, operated, and disassembled the equipment in that man’s residence, and had thorough knowledge about their structure. Thinking back now, part of the Gift that Saigou Homura possessed—“Proto Idea” had started to steadily get stronger at around those days.

And it was also exactly then when that man started to dislike Homura.

Contrary to his aspirations, that young man had reached the limits of Star Particle Body research. No, expressing it like that wasn’t correct to be accurate.

The Star Particle Bodies were already complete.

While alive, Saigou Homura’s father had already completed the Star Particle

Bodies, and had already advanced the study up to the first steps of their practical use. Therefore, just by presenting it to the scientific society as it was, he would still earn great achievements, however, probably the final pride of that young researcher didn't allow that.

Above all, only the final issue left behind by Saigou Homura's father—the way to create Particle Bodies weren't recorded anywhere. Even if there is a thesis and an actual thing, if there is no practicality, the thesis will be one-handed in the end. And above that, there wouldn't be a single originality of his own left behind.

That man hadn't abandoned so much pride that he would permit such ill-formed imitation.

However, that remaining pride of his became the ruin of Homura.

In order to enter the research of Star Particle Bodies, that researcher abandoned everything else that he was researching. Perhaps there was so much merit in this research. If this research was completed, it would raise the current civilization from the roots. It was a great invention that could advance mankind to the next step.

Fortune that exceeded the national budget, honor that exceeded the head of states, he would obtain all of that as the power of an individual. His name would be carved in history, and would be handed down as the greatest person.

It was a glory that was unlikely to be obtained, but it instead raised his motivation without limits. While engrossed in research, he was able to continue dreaming of becoming the king of the world.

However, that vanity—was broken by a single, very young boy.

Young Saigou Homura who possessed the "Proto Idea", had steadily advanced the research that the man should have disposed of. After one year passed after adopting Homura, the other particle research that he was engaged in.....the research he referred to as B.D.A had been accomplished.

That research which should have paired up with the Star Particle Bodies, officially called Blood Particle Acceleration Device, was now used for multiplying the Star Particle Bodies.

However this research——was the reason why the guardian man was given the laboratory for the first time.

When he felt the limit in the original particle research, the man gave up on his original research and switched over to the research of Star Particle Bodies——and yet, the young Homura completed it.

That moment, the shock that assaulted him couldn't probably be described by mere words.

Homura wouldn't ever forget the look that man had in his eyes when he saw him for the last time.

Before long, the man disappeared. It was probably then when the research of Star Particle Bodies and the B.D.A that Homura completed were taken.

For several months after that, Homura who ended up alone was dramatically secluded inside the residence without meeting anyone.

(.....Okay, lets return back to thinking. Main question is what happens from now on.)

While reminiscing about the past, Homura continued thinking even as he dozed off.

During these three days, He searched for suspicious people within his mind, but as expected, the first guardian seemed to be the most suspicious.

(That said, I can't believe that he was able to make progress in the Star Particle Body research. Even If I think back now, he should have been researching it in a completely wrong direction.)

As a child, Homura didn't realize that what that guardian was researching was the Star Particle Bodies. However, thinking about it now, he had a hunch that he was indeed researching such a thing based on all his actions and conduct.

However, sadly for him.....presently, the creation of Star Particle Bodies from scratch is absolutely impossible.

As to why, it's because the Star Particle Bodies weren't artificial creations, but natural instead.

Since there's no knowing what was the creature of the source that it was extracted from, Homura who understood that creating them from scratch was impossible, towards mass production of the particles, he used the way of parasitic multiplication of "Origin".

Because of that, the Star Particle Bodies can bundle together into Astral Filaments on the order of nanometers and cling to the body tissues, collecting information on the genome, and synchronize with the genetic information of the person, the filaments unravel one by one and are incorporated into the cells, dividing within the body.

This is the parasitic multiplication of the Star Particle Bodies which Saigou Homura understood as of now. While these parasitically multiplied Star Particle Bodies depended on the genome information, they end up being altered from their usual state, however recycling them to use as medical treatment and such after extracting them becomes possible.

—Confidentially speaking. It was also given to the livestock of dietary education and the progress was secretly watched over, however the project came to nothing as the livestock was attacked by the Minotaur. My stomach hurts from worrying too much on whether the information about the Particle Bodies ended up leaking from the pig corpses. Section Chief Carla would definitely get angry if it did.

Okay, this is painful so let's return to thinking.

These astral filaments were both the foundation and the true shape of the 3S. Nano Machine Unit that was commonly mentioned.

"Everything Company" has described it as man-made, however this is a complete and utter lie.

3S. Nano Machine Unit—These Particle Bodies that even possessed the perpetual motion, were unmistakably natural creations. Perhaps Saigou Homura's father discovered creatures or maybe plants that contained astral filaments within their bodies among the natural world, and after successfully extracting them, he incorporated them into Star Particle Bodies.

It was understandable that the guardian man misunderstood them as man-made. That's because this is also a proof that an information life-forms that can live on just by reorganizing environmental information exist in the world.

It would be a great discovery if that was to be the case, however if it came to be known that the Particle Bodies were connected to natural creations, then it would raise one big problem.

These extracted astral filaments—the filaments commonly called as “Origin”, are limited in number that existed. The reason why Homura's father couldn't head towards mass-producing them might be because the population of the life-forms that were the source of extracting were few in number, and it might be because he disliked inventing something that would break the natural balance of the world.

With Saigou Homura's method of parasitic multiplication, only the altered specimens that were influenced by the host's genome information could be extracted. For this reason, rather than Star Particle Bodies being unable to display their full ability—if they were altered, they would be imperfect even with perpetual motion. In the first place, energy generated by reorganization of environmental information was presumed to occur most frequently when circulating in the blood vessel at the same rate and the force exerted by the Particle Body varied depending on the corresponding base sequence and was omitted below as a prohibited matter.

That was irrelevant now.

Based on the aforementioned information, there were two things Saigou Homura had to think about.

First—Who is the person that produced the typhoon #link24, the “Bull of Heaven”. If the “Bull of Heaven” is really a monster that sprung forth from the Star Particle Bodies, then it meant that there was someone whose research speed far exceeded Homura's.

In that case, the primary suspect would be the guardian man.

(.....)

However—is that really possible?

The reason Homura understood that the roots of Star Particle Bodies lay in natural creations, was largely due to the Gift of “Proto Idea”. When using particle microscope for the first time, he understood with one glance that it wasn’t man-made, so it was because of that that he chose the method of parasitic multiplication. In the first place, that person, to the very end, should have believed that they were man-made without doubting it.

While it was something beyond his memory, that belief of his was unshakable.

In that case, the answer lies elsewhere.

(“Bull of Heaven”Could it be that you are the “Origin”?)

Homura whose heartbeat sped up from that supposition, stirred as if trying to hide that fact.

Information life-form that manipulates the intention of environmental information and lives by eating energy generated like a haze. If that were the true nature of the “Bull of Heaven”—

(There’s plenty of reasons to fight it.)

There’s a change of advancing the research of Star Particle Bodies. So this time, he should oppose it from the front.

There were lots of anxiety regarding the death of his parents or the movements of that guardian man, but that was not his original mission.

The reason he started the study of the Star Particle Bodies was because he believed that it was useful for the future of the “Canaria Family Home” orphanage. The reason was that if an industrial group like “Everything Company” that was famous throughout the world became their investor, then it would provide the family members that enroll in the orphanage with a good environment.

It was not that he was tempted by Queen’s cajolery.

There was a home and a family that Saigou Homura had to protect.

Therefore he would return to the present era as quickly as possible. Everyone must be worrying without having contact for three days. If it wasn’t a Golden

Week, it would surely turn into a big problem.

(No, normally thinking, it would also be a big problem even during Golden Week. If it goes poorly, the police might get involved huh?Well, I believe Iza-nii will give them a skilful excuse.)

If it was that person, he would handle it well.

Or he will deceive them in dramatic and extremely flashy manner.

.....Imagining that, Homura laughed a bit.

*

Ayato kept poking Homura who was engrossed in thinking and called out to him a little worriedly.

“Senpai? Um, did you hear that I said?”

“.....Ah, my bad. I wasn’t listening.”

Ayato pursed even more. It seems like he was thinking too much. Homura who straightened up, stretched his back while lightly apologizing.

“Really sorry. What was it?”

“As I said, the Game strategy of the “Bull of Heaven” and the Minotaur. Neither of them have been resolved yet right? What should we do from now on?”

If you are fighting, then I’d like you to decide on the guiding from now.

From Ayato’s natural complain, Homura folded his arms and wore a difficult expression.

“Even if you say that, Minotaur aside, fighting with the “Bull of Heaven” is pointless. Cumulonimbus Cloud’s shape would stay as is. In the first place, that’s not something you can just resolve by fighting it. Besides, fighting isn’t the only way to win the Gift Games, right?”

“.....Then, what should we do?”

“First, run from the “Bull of Heaven”. There’s no need to defeat that. On top of that, wait for the Minotaur to show up. If my thinking is correct, there should appear a change in it not long from now. That should give us the right victory

conditions.”

Ayato blinked in surprise from Homura’s words. Contrary to her belief that he was idly reading books in the room, it seemed he put enough consideration to it deep down.

Ayato sat in front of Homura and continued with a serious expression.

“Then, Senpai, you already have the makings of a plan?”

“Well, I’m about halfway there. Want to hear?”

“I do. Rather than that, please say such things faster!”

Sharing information is important! - Reproached Ayato as she raised her index finger.

However before explaining, there’s a need to redefine the victory conditions of this battle once more.

Homura took out his phone from his chest pocket, and looked over the contents of the invitation letter.

『 – The Second Sun Authority War Invitation –』

Dear Saigou Homura-sama.

You have qualifications to participate in the “Second Sun Authority War” being held in the world of Little Garden. For gaining the qualifications to enter the final selection, please enslave at least one Celestial Beast belonging to the “Twelve Ecliptic Constellations” or “Twelve Chén of the Equator” first.

Celestial Beasts required to subjugate: “Taurus”

Winning Condition: ① Subjugation of Avatar of “Taurus”.

Winning Condition: ② Erase the lightning, and return the star to its original form.

※ Rule Summary/Duration Period ※

Due to this being a preliminary game, the duration period would be seven years. After seven years, you would automatically be disqualified from game. No matter who subjugates the beast, it will be counted to Saigō Homura, so please, feel free to cooperate.

※ Important Points ※

This frame of participation is a special frame that was prepared so that Saigou Homura could participate in the Second Sun Authority War. If you abstain/abandon/ignore the participation or are eliminated in the preliminary round, the special participation frame as well as the inherent Gift “Proto Idea” that Saigou Homura-sama possesses would be collected, so please forgive us.

Furthermore, during the game period, you cannot leave the Little Garden so please be careful. Prolonging the game can be considered but please try to complete the requirements within the given time.

Yours Sincerely,

Second Sun Authority War Facilitators “Laplace Demons”.』

“.....Reading this again, the contents are making light of me quite a bit, huh? It would be my win no matter who clears it? It’s as if it’s definite that I would get help, isn’t it?”

“Well, we are beginners after all.”

However, thinking with a cool head, this was unexpectedly easy mode.

While his biggest priority was getting back to his former world, this way of writing also made him not wanting to give in. Homura turned the phone around and opened the built-in app.

Ayato looked at that situation while blinking her eyes.

She who was quizzically looking at the phone asked Homura in a prompt manner.

“.....Senpai? The electromagnetic waves aren’t reaching here you know?”

“I know that. I’m just starting the app called Encyclopedia of Misc Legends of the World. Because I can’t rely only on my own knowledge. It’s handy for supplementing information regarding the Minotaur extermination or the Epic of Gilgamesh.”

“Ah.....So that app? I-I see. I completely forgot about that.”

While sliding the screen, he browsed two legends.

It was an app downloaded with Ayato’s recommendation for killing time, but he didn’t think it would be helpful in this way. The person in question, Ayato seems to have forgotten about it, but there was a wide difference between having this app in Little Garden and not.

The reason Homura and Suzuka were quite knowledgeable about Halloween, Shirayuki-hime, and Moon Rabbit legends was all thanks to this app.

“First let’s search a matching word for the second winning condition——“Erase the lightning, and return the star to its original form”. It should appear somewhere if we take out words and search them.”

“Y-Yes. W-Wait just a minute!”

Ayato opened the page in fluster. She was never seen to be using phone apps for playing, so after all, it seemed that she wasn’t accustomed to using it that way.

Homura changed the pages in order, investigating both of the legends.

“Lightning and Stars.....Searching up these words, I understood that
Minotaur’s real name is “Child of Stars and Lightning Asterius””

“Real name? It has two names?”

“That’s right. I thought of one possibility when I considered the consistency of the two names of the second victory condition “Erase the lightning, and return the star to its original form.” I thought whether Minotaur——was originally a

human.”

From Homura’s such conclusion, Ayato got surprised so much that she jumped up.

“It became a monster afterwards.....N-No wait a minute! Why did you arrive at such conclusion!?”

“First point is that this name Asterius is a name borrowed from the ancestor royalty. This is a proof that at the time of its birth, it was recognized as a royalty and was treated as a human being. Because at that point in time, there was no successors of royalty other than him. In other words, despite having a right for succession, he came to be treated as a monster. From these facts, I assume there exists some kind of Factor X that isn’t left on the front side of this legend.”

That’s right—There has to be some kind of reason. The reason as to why he dropped from royalty to a monster.

“If these assumptions are correct, then the sentence “Return the star to its original form” will gain the meaning of “Turn the Minotaur back to the human Asterius”. Considering that this is a trial related to the Star Particle Bodies, paradoxically, it could be interpreted as “you can turn it back human if you use Star Particle Bodies”, however as there is no guarantee that it is the correct answer and interpretation, we can’t afford to use the “Origin”. After all, there’s just one more left.”

From Homura’s acknowledgement, Ayato held her breath.

Lowering her voice, she looked at Suzuka who was in the same room.

“.....Then, after all, what saved Suzuka was.....?”

“Yeah. I ended up using the second of the three existing “Origin”. There’s no other way.”

Homura brought two preservation capsules accidentally, but when Ayazato Suzuka was seriously injured, he ended up using one of them. He was anxious that both Suzuka and Ayato became the origin carriers, however neither of them had any other choice at that situation. Although there was no knowing unless the progress was observed from now on, within their bodies, the Particle Bodies will transform into two separate specimens.

The biggest problem right now is the fact that there's just one "Origin" remaining.

Because of the parasitic division of the "Origin" of the Star Particle Bodies was impossible, they were preserved by immersing them in a simulated body fluid made from amino acid and salinity which was close to blood, and the only possible way to slowly increase them naturally was by externally giving them stimulation of 32.768 kHz with quartz vibration when necessary. Since creating them from zero was impossible, losing all of the "Origins" had to be avoided at all costs.

".....Understood. Let's believe that Senpai's assumption is correct. Please continue."

Ayato eagerly asked for the explanation.

Homura loosened his shoulders a bit and leaned back.

"Well, wait. The preparations aren't done yet so there's still time. Ayato, should also try thinking about the Game."

"Me?"

"Yeah. Considering that it's a Game made from gods' perspective, the more you think about it the deeper it gets."

Ayato got surprised from the sudden swing. Of course her marks were high in school, but thinking Games like these weren't her strong point. She does her best when she's in a familiar environment, so building up ideas from complicated pieces is one of the things she was bad at.

Be that as it may, when she was told to think, the earnestness that would be put in thinking was also her strong points.

Her appearance as she put her hand to her mouth while struggling with an unfamiliar phone screen was quite charming.

Homura who was unable to watch anymore, raised his finger somewhat proudly.

"Well then, here's just one hint for the diligent and obedient Kouhai. Ever since the start of the Game, "Not even a single unrelated event has occurred.""

“.....? That means, the typhoon damage as well?”

“Not only that. I’m saying everything including the actions of Minotaur and the virus case.Really, it’s well done. It seems that Gift games are things that can’t be cleared unless you overlook the stage from a great view. I was reading the record of past Games to date, but it is really interesting. Hey, Suzuka.”

“Mmm.....I’m challenging the Black Death Game now, so leave it for later.”

Suzuka was struggling with the game records while flapping her feet.

At that point Ayato finally noticed it. The reason these two were constantly reading for the past few days, was to look through the past records in order to amass the experience.

It was such a city, so it was not strange for it to have records of various Games.

While Ayato awakened to the truth over and over, she started to digest Homura’s words once more. It seemed that Homura’s thinking was far more flexible than she thought. If she were to believe Homura’s words, there was a need to reconsider everything from the start once more.

The thing that was the start of everything, the “Bull of Heaven”—The 24th Typhoon crossed the equator, headed north from the southern hemisphere to the northern, and headed directly towards Japan by following the shores of Southeast Asia from Europe.

The Celestial Beast of the Twelve Constellations, the “Bull of Heaven” was probably summoned when it changed its course to Japan. The two bull monsters headed straight towards Tokyo where Homura lived.

This was probably because Homura, who was the Gift Game participant lived there. In other words, one can think that before the “Bull of Heaven” was summoned, its target were the West European countries.

The center of the following events was, after all, the infectious disease. Human bodies were one thing, but this virus that even went as far as to infect

the crops, if looked in a long term, was a great disaster that would even exceed the typhoon damage. It was said that it caused symptoms very similar to smallpox and left ugly scars on the skin. Smallpox was a disease that left cruel scars on the face even after being cured and was called as the “Beauty Determining Disease” in Edo period.

While Ayato went on reading while being in distress due to her unfamiliarity with the phone screen, she asked Homura with a sidelong glance.

“.....Senpai. How far does your awareness of this disease go?”

“Not too detailed. In addition to not confirming the Particle Bodies of the bacteria, it’s also out of my expertise, so I do not know the specifics, but..... Well, if this is a derivative of Particle Bodies, has some kind of abnormality occurred before the parasitic stage in the expression of its traits and caused something akin to a skin disease?”

Suzuka who noticed that Homura and Ayato were progressing their consideration about the Game, left the Game records at that and raised her face.

“That reminds me, about the skin diseases and smallpox, the famous anecdote in Japan is about Date Masamune becoming one-eyed. The famous story goes following: Young Date Masamune whose heart was suffering from getting shunned by his family members and vassals due to his right eye becoming ugly, had gouged out his right eye and changed his mindset! It even turned into a historical drama.”

“S-Suzuka is also well informed I see. However, does Smallpox really come with such a dramatic change of appearance?”

“Oh, you’ve never seen it? It’s pitiable enough that the name “Beauty Determining Disease” is appropriate——”

Then suddenly——Ayato and Suzuka stood up as if they realized something.

As two stood up at the same time, their exchanged glances with unpleasant expressions.

“I got it!I wonder if it’s the same as Aya-chan? Okay, go ahead first!”

“T-Thanks.”

She was still unaccustomed to Suzuka’s such exaggerated conduct. However since this was a special occasion, she certainly felt like finishing the explanation herself.

She coughed a little embarrassingly and said her thought in one go.

“I heard that smallpox was originally a worldwide disease. There was a legend related to this remaining around the world. There was also a similar depiction in the Epic of Gilgamesh. —Then how about the legend of Minotaur?”

“I see, I see. For example?”

A smallpox that has been regarded as one of the diseases of death at that time. The royal family was eroded by this, suffered from skin diseases, and it transformed their appearance greatly. A primitive and reliable means of protecting from this disease that boasts of a high infection rate. For example, confinement in the labyrinth.....No,”

Ayato swallowed a deep breath, her voice trembled with the answer she derived herself.

“I-I see.....! Rather than being confined in the labyrinth, the Minotaur was isolated there as a patient of smallpox, isn’t it!?”

“Ack! You said everything! But with this, the whole story adds up, doesn’t it!?”

Ayato and Suzuka were in high spirits while holding both their hands together.

In short—This was the final conclusion.

“Asterius” who was the prince of Crete and was awarded his ancestor’s name. While being given a beautiful name of ancestor named stars and lightning, the future generations came to call him the man-eating Minotaur.

That is to say, the Minotaur wasn’t born as a monster.

He later came to be referred to as a Monster due to the mysterious Factor X.

Could the source of that be a skin disease similar to the smallpox—like the “Beauty Determining Disease” that was circulated in Japan?

However, in the case that that answer was correct, there was still one point that still made Homura worry.

(If I remember correctly.....The Minotaur devoured the breeding hut of the Houei Academy, right?)

As a result of Industry-academic cooperation, it was a breeding hut that was managed by “Everything Company”, the middle school and the third study and the research center where Homura belonged.

As mentioned above, that breeding hut wasn’t unrelated to the Star Particle Bodies. One of the raised pigs was secretly used as an experimental body for performing parasitic multiplication of the Particle Bodies. For Minotaur to expressly attack the Particle Bodies intended for Medical use, there must be some reason behind it.

(Depending on the situation.....The change in Minotaur might begin anytime now.)

Would that prove to be good or would it be bad? The fact that the Minotaur hadn’t attacked for these past few days was worrisome. He had to think about countermeasures soon.

As Homura once again sunk to the sea of thoughts.

Suzuka clapped her hands as if realizing something.

“That’s right, I completely forgot!”

“.....Forgot? About what?”

“The reward, you know? the reward! If you clear the Game you get some rewards and prizes, right? If we perform in this Sun-something Game, we have to ask what the prize would be!”

I’m sure the prize would be something huge! - Suzuka raised her index finger in high spirits.

They returned an amazed sigh towards Suzuka who could think about the Game rewards under these circumstances, but it was indeed an important point. Apart from obtaining the information about the Star Particle Bodies during the Game, if the rewards were provided apart from it, their motivation would rise.

Homura who put his hand on his chin, started thinking with more seriousness than before.

“That’s right. The reward is important. Super important. What’s more, I’ll participate by cooperating with Queen, so we might also get some kind of reward from that as well, right? It would be good if it was monetary reward to be specific.”

“I can’t overlook this, Senpai. From the way you said it, it sounded like the financial support of our “Everything Company” was insufficient.”

Ayato pointed out with an impish smile. He understood that she wasn’t saying that seriously, however to his regret, this Ojousama was the owner of Saigou Homura.

In order to not incur her displeasure, but to take advantage of it, he followed up on his previous remark.

“Of course, I’m thankful to “Everything Company”. However, it’s still difficult to buy something luxurious like a large TV or going on a family vacation from just that support, right? The other party is a Queen, so I thought she would afford to give that much cash.”

“.....Uh. Although I understood the intention, if Senpai wanted to go on a trip with all the orphanage members, it would be considered at least, you know?”

As if she didn’t like to be thought of as a cheapskate, Ayato avoided looking at his eyes looking a little displeased.

The two Senpais exchanged looks and showed a bitter smile while looking at their pouting Kouhai.

“Okay okay, we got her promise, sister. Let’s make travel plans when we return to “Canaria Family Home”.”

“Right, right. I’m looking forward to it, brother.Ah, that’s right! If the request gets approved, let’s go together with Aya-chan!”

“Me too?”

“Yes. I anticipate quite a big amount of money judging by the research results this time. Thinking realistically, I can afford a luxury like an orphanage trip. When we exterminate the Minotaur, it wouldn’t be bad to take a day off from laboratory as well and go on sightseeing at the Mediterranean Sea with everyone.”

The two girls raised cheerful voices from Homura’s proposal.

“Ohh, Mediterranean Sea, isn’t that nice! But isn’t it a bit early for swimming? Aya-chan has to get a new swimsuit as well! Look, like her breasts, it seems they became quite huge during one year!”

“W-Wait Suzuka.....!”



Having her cheeks dyed with a slight blush, Ayato pinned Suzuka's mouth.

Suzuka being Suzuka, "Use this chance and buy a bikini! You have such a luxurious body and all!" teased her.

While the girls were happily talking...

With a bang, the door opened vigorously, and Sharol came flying in with standing nekomimi.

"Hai hai! Dear visitors are you up!?"

".....Sharol-nee. Enter the room with more consideration."

The three turned their sight at her thinking what was going on, but they moved their focus on another person that appeared from her back.

The boy Porol Gundark who governed the "Underwood", as soon as he discovered Homura, put his hand on his chest and stood unhappily.

Homura moved the book from his face and raised his body.

"Yo. Your face is telling me the preparations are done."

"Yeah. I prepared the goods as requested. It's the latest model even among the special goods. I'll lend it to you with the pretext of test run, but absolutely don't break it!"

"Sorry for all the trouble. Please put the loaning fee on Queen."

"..... Don't say such scary things without any hesitation."

He sighed as if amazed. It seemed that Porol was overly scared of Queen, but considering his standpoint, he couldn't help but be so.

Homura who got up from the straw-thatched bed, turned his gaze towards Suzuka and Ayato.

—*Now then, the preparations for the counterattack are done.*

Glaring at the "Bull of Heaven" that was surrounding the "Underwood", Homura put on the coat.

In order to raise the counterattack signal, he led Suzuka and Ayato and

headed towards the workshop located under the Great Tree—the garage of the Spirit Train.

Chapter 3

—At the same time, in the ruins north of the Great Tree.

The limbs of the Bull Monster trembled and it had collapsed to the front.

The pain was already unbearable even with his body of a Bull Monster, yet it continued to assault him relentlessly. He was rolling around in so much pain that it shaved off his heart and soul. In the city of the Great Tree, the arrowheads of the Fixed Type Large Ballista poured down on him like a rain shower. The Large Ballista that pierced his body without sparing a single place should have been more than enough to kill the Bull Monster. However, despite feeling the pain, the Bull Monster wasn't in a state of dying.

He rolled on the ground, was in so much agony that foam came out of his mouth, but there was no signs of him parting with his life.

On the contrary, he started to become more active.

Every muscle on his body shrank, transformed, converged and compressed over and over, turning the Bull Monster into a completely different creature. He started to fear the mysterious transformation that was happening to his body.

While not understanding what was happening, he could only crawl on the ground and raise growls.

His roars reverberated throughout the ruins where he crawled into in order to hide himself. This land, separated from the city was completely uninhabited. There weren't expected to be any human presences.

“Guh.....Gi-Gaah.....!!!”

His shrieks contained slight traces of human words. It was difficult to give shape to it because of the foam and saliva that endlessly gushed out of his mouth, however those shrieks indeed contained human words. However those shrieks, and also the voice that begged to live, simply disappeared within the

empty space without reaching anyone.

Because he was now the monster of the labyrinth, “Minotaur” – a Bull Monster described in the Greek Pantheon. An aberration that ate boys and girls brought into the exitless labyrinth.

In other words, a type of man eater. Just as the name implied, man eater was a generic name for a race that couldn’t satisfy its hunger other than by eating races of human nature.

Within this “World of Little Garden” where various species like Eudemons and Demons existed, man eaters belonged to the races which were the most difficult in terms of coexisting. Similar races that attacked to the humans weren’t few. Eudemons like Perytons that came to these lands from the continent of Atlantis, were deemed as the murderer species—races that actively killed humans by instinct. Existences like these who actively assaulted intelligent lifeform, coexistence symbiosis was impossible even in the Little Garden of gods. And also, even there, there were few who would consider helping these man eaters. No one would consider saving the one that would eat them. Anyone who saw that appearance would tremble in fear and run away at full speed.

Therefore, there was no one in that place who would help the “Minotaur”.

But contrary to such a situation, the pain that eroded him didn’t stop, and continued altering his body. Regaining the intelligence that was supposed to have faded away, he squeezed out the human words.

—*Help me!*

However, the shriek that he had desperately squeezed out, disappeared into the night sky of the ruins without reaching out to anyone. It probably wouldn’t have mattered even if that place was a human habitation instead of ruins. Most likely, he would have been put to death by hunters by taking advantage of the situation.

If there were ones who wouldn’t run away after seeing a man eating monster.....would they be other man eaters?

Or perhaps, experienced adventurers who have travelled on demon nests

beyond that of the labyrinth.

“.....Now this is surprising. To think that such a truth was hiding behind the legend of the Minotaur.”

“!!?”

Footsteps of a person stepping on pebbles were heard. And reacting to that, the Bull Monster raised his head.

The voice belonged to a boy. The boy who wore a slightly smaller robe that didn't match with his body—Perhaps, was about fourteen years old. He was considerably tall in comparison to the average height for his presumed age, and only the fact that his features still contained hints of immaturity clearly represented that age.

The sudden voice of the youth was familiar, and contained a surprising amount of power.

The boy who appeared in the ruins did not show fear before the monster, and instead he fixedly looked down on the Bull Monster as if something had caught his eye.

The monster, even while putting up with the pain, looked up at the youth.

The youth stepped towards the monster that was lying on the ground, held out his right hand and touched the monster's hair, and called out to the other person—to the young girl who wore black spotted clothes and was waiting behind him.

“Pest. Can you temporarily numb his pain?”

“.....Isn't not that I can't. But is it really fine to do something like that, Jin?”

“At this rate, he would grow insane from pain. That would be troubling. He must contribute to clearing the Game with his true form.”

The youth called Jin turned his gaze towards Pest - the girl who wore spotted clothes.

Pest slightly tilted her head silently to ask about his intentions.

“.....It looks quite painful. Wouldn't it be better to let him die like this?”

“As I said, that would be troubling. This Minotaur.....No, it would be proper to call the current him Asterius, I guess. Apparently he seems to have fulfilled the clearing condition of the Game with an incomplete form while not being aware of it. I believe he doesn’t know what is happening to himself right now.”

Saying so, Jin Russel separated his hand from the Bull Monster——no, from Him.

The Bull Monster continued to stare at Jin with dubious eyes without understanding that it meant. But suddenly, the name Jin had just uttered came to his mind.

“As.....terius.....?”

“That’s right. That’s your true name.”

Isn’t that right? Jin Russel shot a friendly smile at him.

The monster returned a gaze that said he still didn’t understand it, but as Jin uttered the name “Asterius”——The body of the Bull Monster shrank rapidly, and stabilized at the same time.

Giant pair of horns disappeared below the white hair, and soft five toes grew in place of both his hoofs. It’s powerful arms retained their strength, but at the same time changed into human arms.

Pest looked dumbfounded at the transformation that was happening in the twinkle of an eye.

Jin Russell nodded at him with confidence.

After a short while——The Bull Monster, “Minotaur” turned into the white-haired and dark-skinned boy.

“.....!?”

His age was approximately in mid teens. Looking at his digits that were divided in five, the youth with white hair and dark skin was dyed with surprise. Those weren’t cloven-hoofs but the very human hands itself.



“So that’s your real body? You might be bewildered from the long forgotten sensation, however first of all, congratulations. You have completely regained your body and name.”

Jin Russell congratulated him with all his heart, and then took Asterius—the boy formerly known as “Minotaur” close to the ruin wall. It was probably his consideration after judging that he wouldn’t be able to move for a while after the sudden transformation. Jin took out the Water Tree leaves and put them into a wooden cup.

Suddenly, the wooden cup overflowed with clear water. Asterius who was starved and thirsty, he took that cup as if snatching it and drank the water in it in one gulp. As he did so, he felt his whole body being filled with power.

It was probably a transformation done during a state of crisis.

If it was just a bit late, the Bull Monster might have been reduced to yet another monster.

“Okay. First, go ahead and rehydrate yourself to your heart’s content. You can tell me after that.....Now, do you remember about the Gift Games that you are taking part in?”

Jin asked with a gentle voice.

As Asterius quenched his thirst, he poured the water on his white hair, shook his head and looked at Jin.

“.....Gift Games. The games of gods and demons held within this world of Little Garden, is it... Yeah, it’s alright. While my memory is a bit disordered, I still remember that much.”

“Alright then. We can leave that part out in that case. However, you from the legend should have been “The Monster of the Labyrinth”. And now, you are participating in the Gift Game as its “Host”. Isn’t that right?”

Jin Russell asked in order to make sure. Asterius nodded.

Receiving Jin’s words, The former “Minotaur” boy thought back on his origins.

—What gave birth to the Monster of the Labyrinth, was the island of Crete

that floats in the Mediterranean Sea of the Republic of Greece. The legend of the “Minotaur” that was the Monster of the Labyrinth, was based on the Prince of that island.

According to the legend, the King who ruled over Crete of that period, was given a beautiful bull from the Sea God. However, as the King began to obsess over the beauty of the bull, he violated the contract he had with the Sea God and refused to return the bull, keeping the beautiful sea bull to himself. The Sea God was angered by the King’s action and thus placed a curse on the Queen of Crete, causing her to fall in love with the sea bull.

The Queen ordered famous craftsmen of the country to create a puppet that imitated the cow’s appearance, put it on and fulfilled her love with the sea bull, giving birth to the half-human, half-bull child.

The child Queen gave birth to, was temporarily given the name of his ancestor “Asterius”, but was later renamed to “Minotaur”.

Minotaur was later imprisoned by the King’s command into an inescapable labyrinth, and ate seven boys and girls that were sacrificed every nine years. Minotaur was later killed by the Hero Theseus who had sneaked into the labyrinth, closing the curtains of that legend.

It was a pitiful monster that was confined in an isolated labyrinth and had been given a name of a beast by his father the King.

That was the Prince of Crete.

It was “Asterius” that meant Stars and Lightning in Greek language.

However, although Asterius recollected his own legend, he could not help putting his head against the uncomfortable feeling born inside him.

“This legend.....should be about me.”

“Should be? Why the guessing?”

“No.....It’s correct as far as my knowledge goes. And yet, there’s no actual feelings of it. I can’t draw out my memories well.”

He recognized the fact that he was the “Prince of Crete”.

If he closed his eyes, he could easily recall the blue sky and the sea roars of the Mediterranean Sea. The stone palace and the sun that burned with love were engraved down to his very soul.

And yet, the most important part, the memories of the days he spent on Crete was nowhere to be found.

No matter how he was reborn as a monster, he should have turned into Bull Monster Minotaur from a Prince. Since he returned to the human form like this, it wouldn't match up if he had not a single memory of his days as a human.

"I see. In other words, you have no memories of being a human?"

".....I don't know. But it doesn't matter if you think as such. In the first place, by the time I had fallen into a monster, there was no intellect of mine remaining. If you say it was the adverse effect of that, then that's all there was to it. There was just one role in this Gift Game given to the me who was a Bull monster."

"And that is?"

Jin asked while leaning forward.

Asterius didn't return an immediate answer, and looked up at the sky while leaning on the wall. Even to him who was summoned as one of the Hosts of the Gift Game, the current Gift Game was full of mysteries.

While half in doubt, he recited that role which was etched into his mind.

"....."If you want to be saved, meet with Saigou Homura". It seems that's my part in this Gift Game."

The reason why the Bull Monster and the Heavenly Bull headed towards Homura at pinpoint precision was probably because of the existence of that part. As the avatars of the trial, these two had duties to meet Saigo Homura at any costs.

However, trying to speak of it himself, Asterius' face became puzzled by the minute. While saying it himself, he once again thought that it was quite the mysterious contents.

If this was "If you want to regain your memories" he would still understand it.

However, what was “If you want to be saved” supposed to mean?

Precisely because Gift Games are called the games of gods and demons, there weren’t few occasions where their contents proved to be unreasonable. But still, they were created so that they ensure minimum consistency.

It appeared that Saigou Homura who lived in 2000s and Minotaur who existed in the legends of ancient Greece had no relation whatsoever.

However it seemed that Jin Russell didn’t think so. Perhaps there were some points to think about, Jin Russel deeply pondered with a mysterious face while putting his hand to his chin, and then asked Asterius.

“Saigou Homura.....That’s the name of the participant of this Gift Game, right?”

“Yes. That’s as far as my knowledge goes.”

“Is that so.....Thank you, it proved as a reference. So then, what will you do from now on?”

To Jin’s question, Asterius answered with a sharp gaze.

“.....I have no choice but to continue the Game. I don’t know who this man called Saigou Homura is, but there’s just one player in this Game. If I meet him, it might also serve as a clue to my memory.”

“If there’s nothing?”

“.....? Then I just kill him?”

Releasing the killing intent enough to freeze the atmosphere as if nothing, Asterius slowly stood up. That wasn’t a killing intent that a youth in his teens could have released.

It was a killing intent filled with so much pressure that the small birds and animals that were hiding inside the ruins scattered and fled at high speeds. Even though he obtained a human body, his true nature had not changed at all.

The Bull Monster “Minotaur” was still living strong. Then, confronting his enemy, there was only one thing to do.

“.....Are you going to eat him? That Saigou Homura.”

“Yes. And I just happen to be hungry. The last meal I ate was.....was it the domestic pigs from a few days ago? That wasn’t bad either, but there’s nothing better than eating an actual human.”

After exploiting the leaves of the water tree to their fullest, he threw away the wooden cup.

Jin stood up with a bitter smile.

“.....Man eater eating domestic animals, huh. Indeed I have grasped the point. Is that the final keyword?”

“What?”

“Nothing. Well, this must also be fate. If you are returning to the Game, you can take some of my comrades along. They are a bit bothersome, but they should prove to be useful to you.”

As Jin said so, the human presences in the surrounding had increased.

No, probably the ones who were concealing their presences until now revealed themselves. Asterius instantly noticed that he was surrounded from every direction and grasped the great battleaxe.

—There were most likely five people hiding within the ruins.

Although imperfect, Asterius was still a monster of a legend. While it’s true that he was exhausted, the fact that he couldn’t sense a single sign of them until now proved that they were extremely skilled people.

“Hmph.....You are unexpectedly cautious, huh? Did you think I would eat you?”

“Did you not plan to eat me?”

“Of course not. No matter how much of a man eater I am, as one would expect, it would leave a bad feeling if I were to throw my lifesaver into my stomach. I planned to show at least that much courtesy.Well, whatever.

Pseudo Divinity - Celestial Bull Thunder

Come, “ Proto Keraunos “!”

Asterius turned around in disappointment.

As he raised his right hand, the great battle axe came flying into his hand with

rotation. The great battle axe that was supposed to have been too large for a youth in his mid teens, was shrinking to match his hand size.

However it's divine power didn't decline. Instead, it emitted lightings as if blessing it's owner who returned to his rightful form. Both of them who regained their true names, would display power beyond that of the Bull Monster.

While shouldering the battleaxe, "Asterius" glared towards the giant water tree seen in the distance—at "Underwood".

It didn't seem like the current him needed someone's help, however he must fulfill the duty as the Host of the trial. His problem of memory might also be settled as the Game progressed.

After he fulfilled that, he would be someone with neither fate nor duty.

So that the youth can regain his memories. So that the Bull Monster can satisfy its hunger.

The moment he was about to step forth towards the waterfall of the Great Tree in order to fulfill those respective wishes—a huge rumble reverberated from its direction.

"Kh, an earthquake.....?"

Asterius who had no resistance towards the calamity that shook the earth, collapsed on the spot and examined the surroundings. However, the situation was strange for a natural earthquake.

There was also a question about the small animals in surroundings not panicking and running.

Asterius suspected it being the deed of the youth called Jin.....However, Jin himself was looking towards "Underwood" with his mouth half-open.

".....Eh, no way. The plan Porol spoke of, he was serious about it.....!?"

"Hey, why are you consenting to it alone. If you know something then explain!"

Asterius raised an angry voice while on his knees due to the trembling earth. However, Jin slowly pointed towards the great tree without retuning a reply

and stayed silent.

Just at that moment, from the roots of the Great Tree—was raised a spray of water so gigantic that it could be mistaken for a waterfall. Since it could be seen from these ruins that were considerably far, it undoubtedly raised up to quite the altitude.

The water spray rose so much that it made an optical illusion of piercing the heavens, however the truly fascinating thing did not lie there. The giant object that flew out from below the Great Tree, seemed to be so gigantic that it filled the great river to the brim. Its width was about thirty meters even by rough estimations.

A lump of metal that gigantic began to dash above the great river.

“Wha.....what is that thing!? Is the iron fortress traveling on the water!? Could it be a traveling fortress!?”

Asterius raised his voice before that unexpected spectacle. Considering the age he was born in, this was surely worth the metaphor of an iron fortress.

At any rate, it was a lump of metal spanning over 200 meters. Anyone would undoubtedly think it was used for military affairs.

Among the paths of the great river that flowed into many branches, it faced towards them of all things and started to dash. The moving fortress that traveled while overflowing the great river swallowed the ruins one after another.

Pest who was dumbfounded just the same, looked up at Jin after quickly coming to her senses.

“W-Wait a minute. Isn’t that lump of iron coming this way?”

“Seems so.”

“Seems so, huh. That’s not it! Isn’t it dangerous if we don’t run away!”



She pulled on Jin's sleeve in panic, but as there was also the difference in their heights to consider, she couldn't budge him.

On the contrary, Jin stared at the train with a hand on his chin.

"No, well. It's a special test run, so I want to see it from point-blank range....."

"Are you an idiot!? I wonder since when did you awaken to such masochistic hobbies, my master!? Let's just run away already!"

"No use, we won't make it!!!"

With Asterius' scream, the moving fortress that accelerated even further started to rush madly ahead while shaving off the river banks. At this rate, they would be swallowed by the buckshot of earth and water sprays.

Stabbing "Proto Keraunos" into the ground, Asterius used its giant edge as a shield and hid behind it. He was trying to save Jin and Pest as well, but there was someone who acted faster than him.

A tiger shadow dashed as if to block the sprays like a tsunami. That tiger figure that appeared to be hiding behind the cover, grabbed Jin and Pest by the collars with its mouth and dashed towards the empty space.

(.....Ridiculous, where did it come from!?)

Asterius endured to not be washed away by the torrent of overflowing river, but he couldn't hide his surprise at that tiger that appeared suddenly. As for why, it was because that tiger suddenly came flying from a completely unrelated place to the five presences he felt. That indicated that it could have attacked Asterius at any time. If he showed hostility towards Jin even if only a bit, it would've probably ripped him apart in that instant.

Jin held Pest while only his lower body got wet, and expressed his thanks to the tiger that saved him.

"Thank you White Tiger. We would've died had you not saved us."

『.....If you knew that, then don't play around too much. One way or another, you are still our master. Take a bit more care of your body.』

"It's going to be fine. Everyone was there so I believed someone would save

me.”

Was that trust, or simply laziness?

That pure white tiger with beautiful fur—perhaps the one that would remind of a Tiger Deity kind, soared until the safety zone, and announced in an amazed voice towards his master’s passive comment.

On the other hand, Asterius who resisted the sprays was amazed towards that Tiger Deity that appeared so suddenly. It was an orient spiritual rank, but just by one look at it, he felt so much power coming from it just by a glance that his hair stood on ends.

(It’s clearly a Divine.....No, a Celestial Beast class.....!?)

The superior Celestial Beast that governs the section of heaven. Protector Beast of Star Creation, created by the three strongest species of Little Garden. Even in this Little Garden of gods, they are the rare species that one might or might not encounter once in an eternity.

It was not a species that appeared in the vicinity of the human habitation for no reason.

Perhaps it was one of those comrades that this boy named Jin Russell brought along—But he didn’t appear to be someone who would make a Celestial Beast obey him no matter how you looked. If they were a master and servant, he probably held the Gift that forced obedience to specific species. In the unlikely event that he does hold the Gift of Obedience, even Asterius has to be careful.

However without even giving notice to Asterius’ impatience, Jin and the Tiger Deity looked at the moving fortress that dashed away above the great river.

『Hmm. The “Bull of Heaven” also started to move. It appears that the Player is inside that fortress. Does he plan to part from “Underwood” for now?』

“I guess. But it’s bad. He’s still here.....”

Two people and the beast glanced at Asterius.

At that point, he also noticed. If the Player is indeed inside that moving fortress, he can’t afford to lose sight of him here.

.....Now, what to do.

As expected, with this, Asterius stood with a face that couldn't be shown publicly—But in front of him who was in such a state, Jin and White Tiger descended and asked him a question.

“Uhhh. You can get on him if you want, you know?”

『As long as you don't hate to ride together with a bothersome fellow along the way.』

“..... I'll be much obliged. I can't do anything if I don't catch up to that moving fortress.”

It was dangerous to owe a favor to someone who seemed to hold a Gift of Obedience, but he couldn't say no either. For now, catching up with that came first.

Asterius straddled on the White Tiger in place of Jin and Pest.

Then suddenly, Jin told him as if remembering about it.

“And also, that isn't a fortress. And it's not for military use either. It's only armed with ballista as far as I remember.”

“.....What? Then what is it?”

Asterius asked in puzzlement.

He probably felt uncomfortable that despite having such gigantic solid build, it wasn't used for battle. If it was that fortress, then it should have even been able to fight against the natural disasters—the worst enemies that attacked the Little Garden.

However Jin clearly denied that view. He knew that it was definitely not something created for fighting.

With a bitter smile, he revealed the true nature of the moving iron fortress with a bitter smile.

“That's the Super Gigantic Spirit Train, “Sun Thousand” model. It is the center and the planned site for the management of the Sun Authority War of this time.....It is the greatest masterpiece made by a guy I one-sidedly think of as a friend.”

*

—Super Gigantic Spirit Train, Model “Sun Thousand” - First Conductor Chamber.

That lively test run gave the shock to the inside of the train no different than that flashy appearance.

At any rate, it departed while raising giant water sprays enough to swallow the buildings. The conductor Beastmen that were running around restlessly, were going right and left due to the trouble that followed after the shock.

The noisiest of them all, was one calico cat that wore long boots.

He seemed to be one of the conductors—but was he from the monster cat species?

The tip of his short tail parted into two and he walked on two legs.

While appealing with Kansai dialect to the colony of small spirits that were inside the Spirit-driven engine reactor, the calico conductor raised his voice while jumping on two legs.

“This ain’t good, ya speed up too much, ya Chibis! If we pull off such speed, we can’t enter the Ley Line, y’know! Drop the speed, drop the speed!”

“Won’t drop it~!”

“Can’t drop it~!”

“If we drop it, we’ll be caught~!!!”

Ukkyaa~♪—The colony of fire spirits wearing red mantles popped their heads from the thunderously burning reactor and started to make merry. They seem to be playing around, but that probably came from the cheerful nature of the girls of the fire spirit colony. The earth sprite—a spirit wearing a two-pointed head similarly poked her head from the mountain of coal and exclaimed while pointing outside the window.

“Bull! Coming from the sky! Meruls are going to run! Can’t drop speed!”

“Yeah, I get it without needing you to explain the details! But thanks, number two!”

The calico cat raised his claw.

He understood the situation, but he couldn't find a better way.

“Though, it's quite a pinch. At this speed, it'll be impossible to use the super acceleration of the Ley Line. On top of endlessly traveling around the great river and ground surface.....”

“No, it's fine like that! Rush ahead, Calico cat!”

Within the disordered engine room, Porol's voice reverberated. It was unusual for him who was a leader to come to this room that was full of coal among all the foremost wagons of the train.

Confused, Calico cat took a bowing posture.

“However, Second! We'll be attacked by the bull beast at this rate! What will we do if “Sun Thousand” gets destroyed!?”

The Calico cat conductor frankly conveyed the situation despite being flustered.

Saigou Homura who had accompanied him, asked Porol while holding back his desire of wanting to inspect things like the Spirit Train reactor and the Calico cat in the boots who walked on two legs.

“Porol. I'm also of the same opinion as that.....Uhhh, that cat conductor-san. It's good that we were able to get the “Bull of Heaven” away from “Underwood”, but wouldn't it be bad at this rate?”

“Hah! I'll be troubled if you lump this one with other trains! The frame of this Spirit train is made specially with 40% of it consisting of “Adamantium”! It's not going to break by a mere attack! Raise the speed and rush ahead like this!”

“U-Understood, Second!”

Porol issued the command in excitement, and Calico cat conductor tossed in the coals with great haste.

The spirits of the reactor clung to the coals that were tossed in and they immediately started to raise their burning power.

Even while gazing at that situation with great interest, Homura asked while

enduring it.

“Porol. I don’t think that’s the case, but does this gigantic train work on steam engine?”

“Of course not. Then the power conversion efficiency is too bad like that. We make separate nests of spirit colonies for each power section and convert it into power by mutual compatibility. “

“..... Huh? Eh, then what? Does that mean you share the energy gained from burning through different spirits? In other words, the burning energy conversion rate is 100%?”

“I think so? I’m not sure of the details.....So it’s better to ask the ones in question directly. How is it, Chibis?”

“We aren’t chibis~!”

“And~ it’s not 100% either!”

“But it’s close to that~!”

—*Are you kidding me?* Homura muttered in his mind without thinking. It seems being called the Little Garden of gods is not just for show. This world could be a mountain of treasure, Homura reformed his awareness.

Although, Homura couldn’t become so heartless that he would be able to dissect those lovely spirits for inspection. The moral problem and ethical barriers were great.However if an opportunity arised, he wanted to get their skin or a hair part.

“There are a lot of points where I want to retort, but I get it for now. Let’s get back to the topic. First we’ll run up to the safety zone, but what about after that?”

“If we get away from “Underwood”, drop the speed and enter the Ley Line, we’ll be able to accelerate at super speed. We can think of a strategy after we earn some time.”

Homura frowned at Porol’s comment. The time he spoke of was the time limit for clearing the Game. However for Homura, that time was different. Homura and others were under the circumstances where they have to return home.

It was most important for Ayato in particular. Izayoi was probably covering for both Homura and Suzuka, but the situation was urgent for her. After all, she was the young miss of “Everything Company”. It could be turning into a big problem right about now.

Homura took out his phone, and stared at the screen with slight regret.

“I hung the call, but I made a blunder. I should’ve at least told him to get in touch with Prith. I want to get in touch with Iza-nii.....Porol. Can’t there be done anything?”

“If it’s that, you can ask Queen.”

“The Queen? Well, it would be great if I could do that.....but how?”

“There’s a room for special guests in this Spirit Train. You should go there.”

Homura was once again surprised. He didn’t think that there would be a room for audience with Queen in the gigantic train.

“It was indeed our community “Six Scars” that made this “Sun Thousand” model, but it belongs to Queen. If this was treated as a preliminary contest for the Sun Authority War, you’d better listen to her again anyway. The finalist Gift Game rules are a slightly different from the usual ones.”

“.....Is that so?”

“That’s right. From now, in addition to “Hosts” and “Players”, there’s one more——”

“A-Attack~! Attack~!”

“Attack is coming~!”

“Lightning strike alert! Everyone hold on tight!”

In the middle of their conversation, two voices - young and lively were heard within the train.

Followed by a roar of thunder. Shining lighting. That lighting that fell from the heavens fell straight on the Spirit Train. The cumulonimbus cloud drew near while wriggling as if not wanting to lose it’s prey at any cost.

The storm that contained its will wriggled as it created whirlpools, and began

to change its shape to that of a cloven-hoofed animal.

The “Bull of Heaven” raised a sky shaking roar while firing off lightning.

『GEEEEEYAAAAaaaaa——!!!』

The gigantic beast scratched the sky with its hooves as it broke into a sprint. It was difficult to even accurately confirm just how wide it spreaded within the extent where the eye’s could see.

It changed the lightning to a sharp horns, took over the high density cumulonimbus, and approached with a force that seemed as though the sky would fall at any point now.

“.....!”

Inside the Spirit Train that received the thunderstorm and wind and shook violently, Homura fell down, unable to bear it.

However, while the driven rain flooded the river and lightning strikes shaved off the ground, it didn’t seem like the Spirit Train hindered from its tracks. It’s body was violently shaking, but that’s all there was to it.

In order to stop a Spirit Train which was not powered by electric wires unlike that of the outside world, the only way was to destroy its body or remove its tracks. However the Spirit Train traveled at such a regulated track that it made an imagination whether there were rails laid out that were invisible to the natural world, and advanced while hitting its wheels on the earth and river.

In the violent shaking, Homura hit his head while falling sideways, but there was no time for that.

If it was a normal train, the foothold would be unstable just by traveling, and yet the Spirit Train was merely shaking while being pierced by the thunderstorm.

Homura blinked his eyes, surprised that the Spirit Train continued to travel normally even now.

“T-This is amazing. It was such an amazing storm but I haven’t heard anything.”

“Fufun. I’ll be troubled if you get surprised with something like this. Its true

power isn't only at this level. Everything will go as planned if only we enter the Ley Line. After that would be left to go towards the labyrinth of Minotaur in a straight line."

Porol who fell over with an upside down posture boasted of the Spirit Train's abilities. However, his community constructed such a powerful Gift that it could even withstand the attacks of Celestial Beasts. As a leader, he would certainly be proud of it.

Porol who got up, held on to the handrail of the Spirit Train that was still continuing to shake, and announced as if he remembered something.

"Hey, go meet with Queen before it's too late. If it's that whimsical person, at this time, she might have even occupied the special guest room or the audience room without notice and may be enjoying the spectacle."

"Understood. Sorry about everything. I'll be sure to repay you in some way."

"It's fine I said. I'm indebted to master Izayoi in many ways. If it's his relatives, then they are like family to us. Be at ease and don't mind it."

Porol saw off Homura while waving his hand.

However to have lent him such a gigantic Spirit Train so lightly showed that he was quite a generous lad. Or perhaps he had that much of a debt towards Izayoi.

At any rate, there was no changing the fact that he was able gain a bit of time.

Homura headed towards another wagon while holding to the handrail.

However, from a place unaware to Homura and Porol who were in a tranquil state, another thread drew near.

Chapter 4

——“Sun Thousand” - Last Wagon.

The last wagon was where the conductors resided. It was a test run now, but when it started for real, the long trip spanning for a few years would begin.

Because they operated the “Sun Thousand” that was equipped with various interiors like special guest wagons, bedrooms wagons, wagons for opening ball and playing wagons, there were naturally many conductors migrated inside the wagons.

However, that was not all, as expected.

In the last wagon that served as a rear, many arms and Gifts were prepared for assailants. In the event of an emergency, the conductors and warriors will be preparing for the battle to ambush the enemy from here.

And right now, the last wagon of “Sun Thousand” that was being attacked by the “Bull of Heaven”——started moving about in disorder to deal with yet another threat different from it.

Sharol Gundark who was in charge of the battle division of the “Six Scar” Community, had heard an emergency notice from the surveillance spirit “Laplace Little Demon” alias Lapko IX.

Sharol, wearing a specially made conductor hat and shouldering her beloved trident, had tension running through her face.

“Attacker other than the “Bull of Heaven”.....? What kind of whimsical fellow is it, Lapko IX?”

“I’m having difficulty ascertaining because there’s still a distance between us, but they are a tiger Eudemon and a single rider. They are getting closer at terrific speed.”

Sharol’s facial expression became stern just as she heard it.

“Hohou. An Unknown enemy, huh? However, they sure are outlawry fellows for daring to make an assault on the test run of “Sun Thousand”, the latest masterpiece made by the world-famous “Six Scars”! Main forces of “Six Scars”, prepare for interception!”

“Ready for interception~!”

“Start loading~!”

“Prepare for elevation~!”

Ukkyaa~♪ the spirit colony noisily ran around as if having fun, and the soldiers of “Six Scars” continued preparations with tensed expressions.

Sharol also fixed her robe and gloves and secretly asked to Lapko IX.

“.....So, how strong do they look? Will we manage it by ourselves?”

“It might be difficult to fight them normally. There’s already this storm as well. It appears to be a high leveled Eudemon from a glance.....Maybe it’s a Divine Beast class.”

“Uhyaa, seriously!? In that case we can’t leave out the possibility that the rider is a Demon Lord!”

As Sharol gripped the spear and raised her tension while brushing the sweat away. Even as it was, a powerful Celestial Beast like the “Bull of Heaven” was attacking. Being pincer attacked with the Demon Lord would lead to the worst development.

On the other hand, Ayazato Suzuka who came along to the last wagon because of the problem of defense, got surprised with her eyes growing wide the moment she heard the word “Demon Lord”.

“W-Wait a minute! Did you just say Demon Lord? There are even those in Little Garden!?”

Suzuka asked while her eyes sparkled a little. Ayato showed a bitter smile as if troubled for having a curious Senpai. Far from trembling in fear from hearing about Demon Lord, she was in such high spirits that she would even go for sightseeing.

In place of Sharol who was overwhelmed by Suzuka’s high spirits, Kuro Usagi

appeared and raised her Usamimi.

“YES! Demon Lord isn’t a title bestowed upon an individual, but a general term for the greatest calamities that are running rampant in Little Garden! They individually hold powerful Gifts, and are beings that hold abilities that can at times change whole countries, or even whole eras!”

“Ho-Hohou? That’s amazing. Though the scale is so big to get the whole picture!”

“Well, that’s normal for humans of the outer world. To put it bluntly, the Queen who summoned you three is also one of the Demon Lords. So please don’t be careless.Or perhaps I should say, if the opponent is a Demon Lord, it would be beyond our powers. We can’t do anything.”

Sharol informed in a troubled manner while scratching the inner side of her nekomimi.

However they couldn’t give up so easily. She quickly started working out the plan with her hands folded.

“Although, if only we enter the Ley Line, we’ll be able to escape from this! It’s physically impossible for anything to catch up to the super accelerated Spirit Train, so the point is that we only have to gain time!”

“.....I see. So are we attacking with that ballista?”

“Ah, impossible, impossible. Even if we raise this ballista, there’s this storm as well, you know? There’s a chance of it getting shot down by a lightning strike, and it’s impossible to hit them directly with the arrows in the first place, isn’t it?”

There are several openable and closable parts on the wagon decks of the Spirit Train, and it was designed to be able raise the ballista and set it up from there. Arrows of the ballista that was endowed with the Gift of Semi-hitting, are the magic bullets that chase the enemy with tracking as long as they were in sight. There was no way to slip away unless the target is knocked down or its momentum gets killed by this violent storm. However, in this situation where the visibility is bad due to the thunderstorm where even aiming is difficult, it would be hard to make use of its ability to the fullest.

Towards the two who fell silent without thinking of a good move, Kuro Usagi raised her usamimi and proposed.

“Sharol-sama. The enemies are clearly outlaws. Can’t the “Host Master Authority”——“Der gestiefelte Kater”^[1] that “Six Scars” holds be invoked?”

“Hmm.....It’s impossible right now. I can’t speak of the details, but it’s meaningless to use it unless we are at a conversing distance with the enemy.”

“.....So then, are we going to wait until they board and assault them inside the wagon?”

Everyone received Lapko IX’s suggestion and muttered whether it would be safe that way.

It would be best if they could gain time, but the loaded ballista had only 25 arrowheads in it, and that amount was unreliable for the barrage either. If so, then it would be more proper to make preparations to wait in advance, and take the initiative of attack when they boarded.

The Inner side of the wagon would be destroyed but there was no helping it given the situation.

Since it was an advantageous position, surprise attack tactics would be more effective towards higher ranked opponents.

Sharol clapped and gathered attention.

“Alright everyone! Let’s quickly begin the interception! Activate all traps inside the wagon, and move your luggage! Because if the enemy turns out to be a Demon Lord for real, we will be cutting off the last wagon before we dive into the Ley Line! As soon as you move the minimum luggage and assets, prepare to intercept——”

“Please wait.”

Ayato quietly raised her hand in order to interrupt Sharol’s command.

Hearing the suggestion from the unexpected person, Sharol turned around with her nekomimi standing up.

“Yes, what’s the matter, big breasted girl? Do you have some good idea?”

“Yes. I have an idea in regards to using the ballista. In short, the problem is that we can’t hit well enough with it as it is now, right?”

“YES! However, we only lack the skill to hit with ballista arrowheads in this heavy storm.....so if there was someone who possessed such skill, then it could be a different story.”

Kuro Usagi directed her sight towards Ayato while delaying her words a bit. Kuro Usagi doubted whether she and a certain woman were one and the same person. If Kudou Ayato was the same person Kuro Usagi knew well, then even in such a storm she would accurately shoot through the skull of the enemy.

However, appearing as if she did not notice Kuro Usagi’s intentions at all, Ayato shook her head and turned towards Suzuka.

“Suzuka. It seems it’s your turn.”

“Me? But I can’t use such a big thing, you know?”

“It’s alright. You will not be shooting. Rather than the shooter—it would be good if you become the cannon itself.”

—*Come again?* Question marks popped up inside the wagon all at the same time.

Suzuka’s situation in particular was severe.

Being serious down to the roots, she imagined “Ayazato Suzuka who became a cannon itself” as Ayato told her, and groaned with her arms folded with an amusingly frowned expression. Judging at her state as she opened and closed her mouth, she probably imagined a funny scene.

As Ayato revealed slight smile of enjoyment, she turned towards everyone present.

“There’s no need to think too deeply about it. It’s just a nonsense of a girl from the outer world. It’s an idea at the level where there might be worth in testing it. Rather than depending solely on it, I think it would be good to advance both plans.”

“.....OK. I leave that to you! We, “Six Scars” will start preparing for interception, so only take a few necessary people!”

“Thank you, Sharol-san. —Ah, Kuro Usagi-san please help Sharol-san. Our side will be fine with Suzuka and few others.”

“I-Is that so? But wouldn’t it be hard with only the two of you and few others in case of an emergency?”

“No, it will be alright.”

Kuro Usagi, pressed by the smiling face that couldn’t be said whether was soft or not, drooped her usamimi. It appeared that she was vigilant after all. Given the situation, it seemed that she wouldn’t let herself be caught so easily.

Withdrawing as it couldn’t be helped, Kuro Usagi faced towards the interception unit in the vehicle.

*

While the two-sided strategy was being developed inside the “Sun Thousand”—The attackers that were Asterius and the White Tiger, steadily advanced towards the Spirit Train. The Bull Monster Asterius that was straddled on the Tiger Deity, carried the giant battleaxe on his shoulder and awaited the opportunity to attack.

However, it was not because of anxiousness that they didn’t approach the Spirit Train.

It was because the other person that they heard would be joining them on the way didn’t appear at all.

While Asterius bared his fangs out of impatience, he asked to the White Tiger.

“Hey, White Tiger. Is your comrade not coming yet?”

『Pardon me. She’s a moody and irresponsible girl. I think she’ll come any time now………』

“I heard that for the third time already. Did you think my memory was that bad?”

Muu, the White Tiger lost the words to say. In addition, Asterius who hit his stomach, announced in order to make progress.

“It would be annoying if they escaped like this. In the first place, your goal

should be for me to advance the Game normally right? Then transport me without complaining. Or stop the iron fortress.”

『..... **It cannot be helped. Let’s hear what that little girl has to say later.**』

The White Tiger leaked a small sigh. His appearance seemed to be too far off from the proper majesty that he should have—However, that evaluation was overturned in an instant.

The moment his forelegs that were pushed forward touched the atmosphere, the Celestial Beast’s running speed underwent a drastic change.

The thunderstorm that was obstructing the vision parted away as if avoiding the body of the Tiger Deity, and the storm became a tailwind and started to push his back. Unable to bear the sudden increase of speed, Asterius had his upper body overturned, however he clung to the white fur with enough power to stick his nails in it, and held onto it with both feet.

He almost fell down, but if it were a normal person their body wouldn’t even have been able to withstand the shock that came with the acceleration.

It was said that the Gryphons of the Greek Pantheon manipulated the fluids to protect the riders from the acceleration. That was because the reasons why the Eudemons called Gryphons were created were two: “Pulling the war chariot” and “Protecting the treasures of Gods”. They would be disqualified as rider beasts if it appeared that they would kill the war chariot passengers with their own acceleration.

However this pure white Tiger Deity was different.

Originally, this beast did not have the plans to carry a rider on his back. Let alone the rider, the current speed was so dangerous that it would even mow down all the lifeform surrounding it.

In fact, his acceleration broke through the wind and rain and even gave shock to the Spirit Train.

From the side, the Spirit Train that received the shock shook violently, and slightly moved from the great river track. Following that, the White Tiger realized that the place the Spirit Train was rushing to was the surface of the Ley Line.

Talking a small distance, the White Tiger growled in a small voice.

『.....Mu. This is bad, Bull Monster. It appears that this iron fortress is made of “Adamantine”. Moreover, it seems to be travelling over the Ley Lines and receiving divine protection. It’s foolish to destroy it, and I can’t stop it with half-hearted power either.』

“My my.....To construct a fortress with the most valuable asset of Greece, it seems there are people of firm character in Little Garden. So even a Celestial Beast raises his hands?”

『I hate to do it, but there’s no other choice but to board on it. There should be some kind of entrance. Or perhaps there’s also the method of breaking through the outer wall. Although it’s made from Adamantine, your battleaxe should be able to cut it. Judging by the looks of it.....could it be the prototype of Zeus’ Thunder?』

The White Tiger said while pointing towards “Proto Keraunos”. He seemed to be confident about it from his tone, so Asterius shrugged his shoulders thinking denying it would be meaningless.

The double-edged axe that Asterius originally used, official name Labrys—was a Gift befitting of “Labyrinth” etymology, and it was a weapon different from Keraunos. It was an extremely powerful Gift on its own, however this Keraunos that took the shape of his Sun Authority excelled even that.

This double-edged axe that was endowed with the Authority of Taurus, held the power that corresponded to the prototype sacred tools of various Western Europe, Northern Europe and Orient gods.

In past, both edges of the double-edged axe, were regarded as the horns of one of the holiest animals - the bull, and there were many who treated it as the authority symbol of the governor of the skies.

In the Western Europe, Zeus’ Lightning.

In the Northern Europe, Thor’s Hammer.

In the Orient, Indra’s Vajra.

The powerful moldings that would attack the enemy with both sides, are seen

as the weapons of chief gods and war gods, and are also called the “The Strongest Proofs”. Furthermore, this axe was bestowed with the ability that held the most destructive power among Twelve Constellations.

However much it is a fortress of Adamantine that’s worthy of being the armor of gods, it should be bisected in two with just a single swing of it. To be able to endure the Keraunos with its full power unleashed, it should be something around the level of the Strongest Shield—Aegis of Capricorn, that had the protection of Twelve Constellations.

“Hmph.....Is this where I should say as expected of a Celestial Beast? But you are looking down on it a little, Tiger Deity. If I seriously swing “Proto Keraunos”, everything in the surroundings—until the horizon would be turned into dust. But I personally don’t intend to do that.”

『Hohou. So you don’t like meaningless destruction? That’s quite lenient for someone who’s called the Bull Monster. Taking in mind the damage to surroundings, isn’t that quite like a military men?』

The White Tiger spoke as if poking fun at him.

He had no other intention aside from teasing him, but it came back with a bigger reaction than expected.

Asterius who was lost for words and violently shook his eyes, revealed a bitter smile while timidly holding his mouth. He looked at White Tiger’s face dumbfounded, but then said while glaring at his palm as if reflecting on what kind of person he was.

“.....That’s right, huh? No, that’s exactly right. What am I even saying. It’s unrelated to a Bull Monster like me whether the damage befalls upon the innocent nation. Those right now weren’t the words a Minotaur should say..... No,”

Asterius shut his mouth as if inspecting his own words.

In the first place, Monster refers to a disaster with intentionality.

The aforementioned Perytons were exactly that.

Perytons existed not by the reason and instinct of “Killing others in order to

live” but just “Killing people”. But as they rejoiced life, never did they had necessity to kill people. If asked whether murderer species could live without killing mankind, the answer would certainly be this.

The same can be said for Minotaur.

The Minotaur being a Monster of the Labyrinth was a cannibal, but it couldn't be called a tribe who couldn't live without eating humans by any means.

Rather, in case of taking in mind the nutritional value necessary for living, it could be concluded that the efficiency was bad.

In the first place, the reason Minotaur was committing cannibalism—Was probably because it was a spiritual rank that relied on the monster nature residing in the blasphemy that was the act of eating lifeforms that possessed souls.

“——. That's right, I'm not mistaken. Minotaur isn't from the race of murderers but cannibals. That's why I shouldn't commit murders that isn't connected to cannibalism.Don't say misleading things, Tiger Deity. I am not wrong in any way.”

Asterius condemned the White Tiger while being angry.

White Tiger despite seeing through his thinking that resembled worry and warped rationality, stated his apology without any particular feelings.

『Is that so? I did something improper. You are certainly not mistaken. I'll refrain from meddling from now on.And, what do we do? Invading would be difficult at this rate, don't you think?』

Returning to the main problem. The problem now was how to invade this gigantic moving fortress.

The Spirit Train was still under the fierce attacks of the “Bull of Heaven”, however its speed didn't know of declining. Its speed couldn't be compared to the Celestial Beast's sprint, however there was no way of knowing of what kind of trump card it was hiding. He wanted to avoid ending up in a shameful state by underestimating them and receiving a counterattack or letting them slip away.

Even with his sure-kill technique that utilized pseudo-lightning being sealed, Asterius showed a confident smile indicating that he could still win despite that.

“Regarding that, I have an idea.”

『**Fumu. Let’s hear it.**』

“To put it simply. It would be good If I hold a normal Game as a Minotaur and fight with those guys. In that case, don’t you think it would be faster to make them come out without getting inside ourselves?”

Asterius revealed a sadistic smile. Even for the White Tiger, that was a desired outcome. He directed a questioning gaze asking how to do that.

Asterius took out a small double-edged axe used for rituals from his pocket.

White Tiger immediately realized that it was a powerful Gift——But suddenly, he stepped on the atmosphere and leaped away from the Spirit Train.

Asterius wondered what was going on, but he quickly grasped the situation.

The deck of Spirit Train opened and ballista appeared from it.

『**It’s coming. Get ready, Bull Monster!**』

Taking White Tiger’s advice, Asterius put himself on guard. If that ballista held the same ability as the one from the other day, then they would pursue them even if they avoided the arrows.

It would be hard to cope with unless they were resolved to knock down every single one of them.

Asterius prepared while holding the double-edged axe in one hand and holding on to the White Tiger’s fur with the other.

With the sound of a gong that seemed to signal for a simultaneous barrage, the ballista arrowheads shot out, piercing through the wind and rain. Their totaled twelve in number, but only three approached them directly. If it was only this much, it wouldn’t be a problem to knock them down.

Even if they instantly released the loaded rounds, the ratio that went straight was pretty much the same to the point of being painful to watch. If one was challenged with this degree of arms they would be amazed beyond their anger.

Only the reloading and firing speed were praiseworthy, but like this, they looked like an amateur.

Asterius who knocked down the ballista arrowheads on the spot, immediately understood the war power and circumstances of the enemy and encouraged himself.

“It was a mistake for them to choose ballista in this thunderstorm! With that degree of skill, there is no chance of hitting us even by luck! Be ashamed of your inexperience and become the rust of Keraunos!”

He kicked the abdomen of the White Tiger and instructed him to get closer to the ballista. The ballista appearing on the deck meant that there was a door that could be opened and closed as well as an elevator.

White Tiger who immediately understood his intentions, dashed towards the ballista that appeared above the deck. If it was his speed, he wouldn't need more than a second to destroy the ballista and take down the archer.

White tiger who drew near to the enemy with speed that left the sound behind and overtook the wind, bared his fangs and rushed to attack the ballista. However, his fangs—pitifully stopped at tearing through the air.

『**The ballista disappeared.....!?**』

That's right, it disappeared.

—The ballista itself had disappeared. The ballista that gave off sounds until just now, disappeared without leaving a trace behind as if everything was a lie.

Everything including the archer vanished like mist.

From the sudden event, the White Tiger whose momentum still remained fell down from the deck.

In addition to the wet foothold, his claws could not stand on the sheet of Adamantine. Without stopping his momentum, the White Tiger stepped on the atmosphere and stopped, but he shouldn't have done that in this situation.

Asterius yelled while kicking his abdomen.

“Don't stop your legs. We are surrounded!”

With Asterius' reproaching voice, the White Tiger finally noticed it.

The first nine shots that were supposed to have flown towards random directions, have surrounded them from every direction before they noticed it. It wasn't certain what kind of trajectory they drew to come back, but if the Gift close to endlessly tracing the target didn't dwell in them, there was no way they would fall into this situation.

They knocked down four ballista arrowheads at once and dodged the other five. Taking a distance from the arrowheads that turned back, they adjusted the position so that the trajectory would head directly at them and knocked down all the arrowheads.

Their speed itself couldn't be a threat to the White Tiger and Asterius, however their tracking ability and number was troublesome. In addition, different from normal arrowheads, the ballista arrows were thick and had a huge weight. It was certain that it would become a severe injury if even one of them were to hit.

(.....No, that's not what I should be thinking about. In the first place, the released ballista arrows should have went astray without pursuing us.)

There existed Gifts that would track targets unconditionally, however a Gift that powerful wasn't supposed to be mass-produced in large quantities. To say nothing of the fact that it was out of the question for them to still aim and pursue the target despite the initial aim being off.

What's more, the disappearance of the ballista just now was also concerning. In the first place, even though the "Bull of Heaven" still created whirlpools in the sky, rising the ballista onto the deck was a foolish plan in that heavy storm.

There were undoubtedly some tricks behind enemy's Gift.

However, without having any time to solve that mystery, countless numbers of ballista and archers appeared on top of the deck.

Different from last time, the distance was close and aiming wouldn't be hard even in this storm. The instant the enemy revealed themselves, they released a simultaneous barrage.

The White Tiger raised the altitude and attacked the ballista arrowheads from

the sky.

And ballista as well, without quickly disappearing, released innumerable arrows to bring them down at once. The battle between the two which seemed like it couldn't be overturned, gradually began to rival each other.

*

——“Sun Thousand” - Armory of the last wagon.

The tactics devised by Kudou Ayato, was more successful than imagined.

The horizontally lined up ballista inside the wagon were facing the empty space, however they continued firing them on command. However, the ballista arrows never penetrated inside of the wagon.

As for why——It was because Ayazato Suzuka who possessed Apport &Asport stood at the edge of ballista with her hand raised overhead and transferred the fired arrowheads towards the enemy.

“Amazing! Suzuka is amazing!”

“Ballista disappeared! Even arrows disappeared!”

Ukkyaa~♪ - the spirit colony jumped about.

Lapko IX also nodded her head from Ayato's shoulder as if admiring it once again.

“T-That surprised me. To be performing object teleportation without touching them with hand! I have seen many teleportations in the past, however among them, only Maxwell Demon should've been able to perform teleportation without touching.”

“Yes. It appears there are some requirements, but it's an extremely powerful teleportation Gift.”

However they didn't think it would be compatible to this extent.

There were two especially unique points of Ayazato Suzuka's Gift——“Apport &Asport”.

First, “Being able to teleport objects without touching them”.

And second, “The teleported objects do not lose their kinetic energy”.

If one transferred projectiles like ballista arrowheads towards the enemy, then it wouldn't be hard to surround them or strike their blind spots. The time and effort to carry the ballista or gaps for using elevators wouldn't appear, and safely evacuating would be possible.

Among the Gifts of teleportation system, Suzuka's Gift of "ability to freely teleport objects to a straight line of her left hand" from "the objects on a straight line of her right hand", boasted of extraordinary tactical nature. The tactics Ayato told to that Suzuka, was to "transfer the projectiles with "Apport & Asport" and carry out multi-sided attack".

This was the trick behind the battle being carried out on the deck.

It was such a cheat that as long as it was in a straight line, flying objects or even a closed room space could be meddled with. The Gift bestowed on Ayazato Suzuka, was a Gift that showed its true power in group battles instead of individual use.

"However, we are stalling time as much as we can. If only we had the Gift of Hermit of "Perseus" here, we would've lent it to her."

"That's a wonderful idea. Please consider it if there's a next time."

If the Gifts of Hermit and Distant Teleportation were combined, it would undoubtedly be the birth of the unrivaled Player.

As the battle entered the struggle for supremacy, Suzuka transferred to the distant place in the sky for a moment to confirm the situation and quickly returned back. Suzuka shook her slightly wet hair left and right, and reported the situation with clenched fist.

"Amazing, amazing! Everything developed just as Aya-chan said!"

"No, you are the one whose amazing, Suzuka. You are doing perfectly despite only being suggested the tactics once, aren't you?"

Ayato revealed a half-admiring, half-amazed bitter smile.

"However, Suzuka. Why didn't you settle it with the first arrow? If it's this Gift, it should've been possible to take them by surprise."

"I could do that.....But I thought if one who showed a little failure at the

beginning, then the enemy would become careless and come rushing. Look, my Gift isn't effective beyond range of 120 meters. Wouldn't it be troubling if they fled? That's why I thought it would be better to approach them from the other side."

This is what they call girl power! Boasted Suzuka with her index finger raised.

That argument was completely off point, however Ayato saw her in a new light. To her who regarded battle as attacking the enemy with exquisite skill and tactics, the plan to purposely display one's own inexperience was probably an unexpected idea.

"The secret would be leaked before long, but we should be able to gain some time. If we enter into the Ley Line during this time, we should be able to start super acceleration and break off from them."

"..... I see. Aya-chan is quite well-informed."

Ayato's heart skipped a beat from her nonchalant smile and remark.

Her tongue slipped just now. Even if you took into account Ayato's speech and conduct until now, it would just be a matter of time to notice that she was related to Little Garden.....or rather, keeping her secret would hit its limits any time now. It's difficult even for her like this, and above all, it was painful to keep the secret from Suzuka and Homura.

Ayato who turned around to dodge the matter, left Lapko IX to Suzuka and started walking towards the wagon in front.

"Suzuka. Lapko IX. I leave this place to you. I'll go have a little audience with Queen."

"Eh? Ah, alright. Will you be alright alone?"

"Yes. If it gets dangerous, please rely on Kuro Usagi-san. Because inside this wagon, she is undoubtedly the strongest war power."

Leaving those words behind with a smile, Ayato departed from the last wagon.

Suzuka was surprised with her mouth agape with the words she left behind at the last second, but that was only natural.

Because she probably thought that rather than relying on such a young and adorable usamimi girl, she should have relied on Sharol who was still boisterous and worked hard.

Ayato slightly smiled as she read her inner feelings.

If Kuro Usagi who was the member of the War God's household and was called the "Aristocrat of Little Garden" were to fight seriously, she would be able to easily achieve something like protecting the Spirit Train. However, since her original duty is to be the judge, it wouldn't be good to depend on her unless necessary, and it would be unsightly both as warriors and Players.

Although she decided to remain a spectator, even that was reaching its limit.

Even for Kudou Ayato—The time to grasp her sword had come.

[1 Puss in Boots.](#) ↩

Chapter 5

Saigou Homura, guided by one of the Colony Spirits, the earth spirit Merul, arrived at the room for noble visitors.

As this tiny spirit that was no bigger than a palm rode on his head, the feeling that he had come to another world doubled at once. It was not certain where the body function existed in this palm-sized body, but surely there must be a function that Saigou Homura didn't need to know of.

"Here! Queen's room, here!"

"Thanks. I'm fine with being guided up to this point, so you can return back to the engine room."

"Got it~! Say hello to Asuka's family~!"

With a *Pyon!* Merul jumped down from Homura's head and walked away with adorable footsteps. "Who is 'Asuka's family' supposed to be?", Homura tilted his head as question marks floated above his head, but he was probably mistaken with someone.

(Tiny child spirits, huh?I bet the children would be delighted if I showed them the fairies, but I can't really take them back with me.)

Even if he wanted to tell them about his travels, it was just too absurd, as expected.

Just traveling to another world was unbelievable on its own, so even if he talked about the palm sized spirits or the gigantic Spirit Train that traveled on the water, it was certain that no one would believe him. Although it could be said that the children of "Canaria Family Home" were a bit special, they were still modern kids on the inside. If he were to talk about such things, they would instead think that he was treating them as kids and get angry.

Alright, Homura faced towards the door. When he raised his hand to knock, Ayato came running from the next wagon towards him.

“.....Senpai? Have you been summoned by Queen again?”

“No, I came for my own business. What about you?”

“I’m.....Yes, I’m same as Senpai as well. I was thinking of retrieving the things I entrusted to her.”

Ayato said that in an exceedingly natural manner. Homura also wasn’t surprised by it anymore.

Because, from the very start of this matter, there were hints that she already knew about this unusual phenomenon.

Even regarding the mail that became the reason for being summoned to Little Garden, she knew everything. It wasn’t definite for what reason or circumstances was she related to Little Garden—but, be that as it may, it was not like it would change their standings as Senpai and Kouhai in school or the client and the hired researcher.

He deliberately didn’t ask questions and nodded with a serious expression.

“Is that so? You already know that she isn’t your average someone, right?”

“Yes. I know about that more than Senpai.”

“Seriously? I want to hear more regarding that, but that comes after we return back.”

Homura and Ayato mutually nodded. As long as they understood that each of them had their own circumstances, they should wait for the right time to talk.

With a tensed expression, Homura knocked on the visitor room, requesting for the permission to enter.

For a while, there was no reaction, but as he lightly knocked once more, the voice was heard from the inside.

“Come in. I permit you to enter.”

Queen’s voice resounded. It seems she was inside after all.

Straightening themselves once more, the two stepped inside the special guest room. Homura put himself on guard wondering just what kind of threats would he get this time, however, no traps were set in particular this time.

Instead there appeared shapes of a woman dressed like a employee and a walking candlelamp.

The employee woman had long plaited hair hanging on her back, and looked towards them with gentle eyes.

The employee who carried a feelings of a perfection as an adult woman, looked at Ayato with a smile and waved her hand. Ayado meekly nodded with a stiff smile and straightened herself.

The interior of the room was furnished with gaudy equipment appropriate for a room for special guests, and the flame of the candles of the chandelier made of cut glass illuminated the room with flickering lights.

The walking candle lamp with a blue flame banner engraved on it was running around noisily and laying out the tea preparations. It was probably being brewed beyond the door that was was located inside the room and was only around 50 cm in size, but it was very questionable as to how exactly was it being brewed.

However, the other party wasn't someone who he could ask something so trivial.

The Queen, "Queen Halloween" was courteously sitting at the round table made of Oak. Her golden hair and looks were arranged gorgeously as always, worthy of her other name of "Golden Queen"—however...

For some reason, at this moment, she, despite being expressionless, was looking at Homura and Ayato with a slightly annoyed gaze.

Homura planned to quickly announce his business, however seeing her clearly displeased state, it was difficult for him to break the ice first.

.....Did I show some kind of impolite behavior?

Homura asked Ayato with just his gaze. Surprisingly, however, Ayato too looked at Homura with a sour expression on her face. It seems that even from her perspective, Homura did something impolite.

Homura who had no idea what to even apologize for had no choice but to awkwardly stare at Queen.

However within the uneasy atmosphere—the attendant woman pointed out his mistake with a faint smile.

“Listen, young man. You made a mistake with the amount of knocks, you know?”

“Huh?”

“Senpai. As the international manners, you knock three times with those you already know, and four times if it’s someone you meet for the first time or a person of upper class. Knocking only twice is.....umm, err. Usually it’s something used in places like restrooms.....it is by no means something to be used when visiting a room of someone of high social status.”

Oh shit! Homura felt chills run down his spine.

It was manners omitted in Japan, however the other party now was a God from Western European culture. It was inevitable that she would take offense that her room was treated as a restroom. Moreover, Homura was also impolite in his last audience with her by being late. She forgave him last time, but continuously doing it would worsen her impression of him.

Likewise, Queen sharpened her lips in a blaming manner and frankly drew her conclusion.

“Saigou Homura. Since you are our representative candidate, I’ll forgive you for being impolite for the second time. I’ll overlook that much with tolerance. —However, there’s no next time. I was wondering whether to kill you on the spot right this moment.”

Be careful from now on, Queen gave her warning and sipped her black tea.

But to be tolerated twice for his impoliteness, the Queen was quite generous compared to what he heard.

There was also him being lucky, but from now on, he did not want to commit such foolishness as to cross over the death line before he noticed it. Homura etched it in his heart to memorize the British manners when he returned back, gave a bow and took a step back.

It would be better for Ayato to go forward first instead of Homura announcing

his business.

Ayato quickly read the atmosphere and stepped forward.

She hesitated on how to begin to talk before Homura—However, she can also take quick action once she made up her mind. Realizing that her first words should be this, Ayato elegantly bowed.

“It has been a while, Queen. Scathach-sensei. Queen’s Knight, “Faceless” has now returned.”

“I see. It’s been a while. According to your body time, it must be fourteen years, right, Scathach?”

The woman referred to as Scathach agreed while pouring the black tea that the walking candlelamp brought.

“It is as you say, Queen. —Fufu, Ayato looks lively above all. That knight title is a thing from before reincarnation, so if you are introducing yourself, you should use your surname Kudou or your British surname.”

“I’m feeling obliged. I will do so from now on.It seems that Sensei hasn’t changed as well. Are you assuming a position of Lord Butler now?”

“That’s right. Does it suit me?”

The Lord Butler Scathach put her hands on her back and took a pose. Ayato agreed with a bitter smile without thinking, but it certainly suited her. Since the tight clothes of the butler’s suit made the body line clearly visible, just by wearing it and standing, she who boasted of height and extraordinary proportions was like a painting. Regardless if they were the opposite or the same sex, she would undoubtedly appear attractive to them.

While displaying a forced smile as if troubled, Ayato continued with harmless words.

“Makes me think that Sensei would look good in anything she wears. —Have the other masters not come?”

“They haven’t come, but they all have been informed. Without a doubt, they all must be angry at heart now from your current shameful sight. Actually, I’m the same.”

Although she displayed a gentle smile, her eyes boiled and conveyed her anger.

Ayato hung her head with a bitter expression while Queen smiled from pure enjoyment as she sipped her black tea.

However Homura who listened from the side was thinking about something else.

Judging from odds and ends of the speech, it sounded like Queen's and Ayato's relationship was that of a master and servant.

Moreover, what did the word "Reincarnation" mean exactly? As expected, Homura wanted an explanation. As there were also other things on his mind, Homura wanted to immediately ask about them from the side, but Queen seemed to be enjoying even that reaction of Homura. Considering Ayato's standpoint, it would be safer to stay silent for now.

".....I'm ashamed of myself. I am resolved to lose even my knight title."

"Right. If Queen didn't stand for you, I certainly planned to do just that."

Ayato and Homura got surprised and looked at Queen. Queen leisurely drank her black tea, but she knit her brows a bit from this manner of speech.

".....Scathach. It's not like I particularly stood for her."

"Oh, you are right. It was a merciful judgment of Queen."

"It wasn't merciful either. But it's wasteful right? I like the bloodline of this child quite a bit. It is easy to ruin it, but isn't it a pity to let her go?"

As she announced that, Queen raised her right hand and faced her palm upward.

With a flick of her wrist, a silver-colored card appeared from the empty space. The sun and gold emblem engraved in the center perhaps symbolized "Queen Halloween".

Seeing that emblem, Homura inclined his head in doubt.

(Eh.....That symbol, if I'm not mistaken, is from "Everything Company".....?)

Homura lowered his line of sight and confirmed the logo of his phone. The trademark on the phone made by “Everything Company” resembled the banner of Queen.

Homura pondered on what this meant.

Guessing Queen’s intentions, Scathach covered her mouth with a hand and smiled questionably.

“I see. Return love sword and reevaluate, is it?”

“It’s like that. She was defeated while her familiar arms were taken away. It should be fine to overlook her one loss, right?”

Queen flipped the card with her fingertip and ferried it to Ayato with rotation.

Scathach folded her arms behind her and informed while erasing her smile.

“—That’s how it is, Kudou Ayato. Queen is saying that she will pardon your defeat. Next time, show the Greek Monster and self-centered snobs the way of Ulster.”

Take the front! She ordered with a sharp glint in her eyes. Ayato glanced at the card with the “Queen Halloween” symbol engraved on it and respectfully bowed.

“I humbly receive the imperial command. —Well then, Senpai. I’ll excuse myself first.”

“S-Sure. But is it alright?”

“There’s no problem. From now on, I won’t let anyone harm even a finger—nay, even a single hair of Senpai and Suzuka.”

Smiling gently, Ayato left the special guest room. Before long, from the other side of the door, the sound of her running towards the last wagon was heard. She probably went to attack the enemy who was coming to attack now.

As that sound completely disappeared, they directed their gaze at Saigou Homura.

Homura, not knowing where to start from, stiffened his face.

Unable to just watch him, Scathach took one step forth and bowed while

suppressing her laugh.

“Should I say, nice to meet you? Lord butler-cum-head maid-cum-Queen’s overseer—I am called Scathach. I don’t think you will be unreasonably killed within the reach of my eyes, so you do not have to be so nervous, you know?”

“.....No, that’s not really the case.”

Even if it was pointed out with a smile, the problem didn’t lie there. At any rate, the things to hear and to tell were too much. Just from that conversation now, the amount of questions he had became tenfold.

However, he couldn’t afford to stay silent like this and let the other party take the initiative.

Putting aside the matter regarding Ayato, now is the time to give the answer of the other day.

“Queen. First, about the matter from few days ago, I have brought my answer.”

“Is that so. Let us hear it then.”

Queen released her hand from the teacup full of black tea and stared into Homura’s eyes.

She was someone whose emotions could be felt somewhat, but it was fundamentally difficult to understand what she was thinking. Moreover, it was difficult to negotiate when her words came back with a bite.

Homura was hesitating on the starting words, however, making up his mind that it was no use to hide it, he said.

“Queen. You want me to appear in Sun Authority War and fight together, right?”

“It’s not entirely correct, but that’s right.”

“I can agree with that. If there are people who are trying to abuse the Star Particle Bodies, I’m also fine with fighting with them. —However, I want to believe that the reason of fighting is for mutual benefit.”

For mutual benefit—The moment he uttered those words, Queen raised her

eyebrows a bit. It probably wasn't something to the point of unexpected, but she probably also thought it was a boring decision.

With the other party like her, it was an established tactic to throw 70% of your hand at them and observe their reaction.

Sure enough, the Queen also didn't make immediate judgment. However, with that, she probably lost all interest. She lowered her gaze and turned her consciousness to black tea, and asked him mechanically while leaving her consciousness elsewhere.

"I see. —And so?"

"Since we're are fighting, I want to hear the details regarding the enemy. About the true identity of the "Bull of Heaven" and the enemy that is currently attacking the "Spirit Train", I want to know everything you know about them."

"Now, that's quite an assertive demand."

Scathach who was listening the talk from the side raised an exaggerated voice. She was probably amazed by what Homura said, however these conditions that could even be called reckless have instead attracted Queen's attention.

Given that he said "Mutual Benefit", it would be out of the question unless some kind of information was presented from Homura's side. All the information regarding the enemy naturally also included handing over the information that touches the answer of the Gift Game.

It meant that, while requesting that much information, he could present information of equal value. It was an opportunity to guess the degree of Saigo Homura's hand, and it was also possible to judge whether to dismiss him or not at the same time.

Queen once again faced Homura with a smile, and asked a question that might have been the last.

"I don't mind telling you.....But in exchange for that information, what do you present?"

"Remaining Sovereigns of the Sun and the details regarding them."

As expected, from Homura's words, even Queen slightly widened her eyes. She planned to immediately replace him if he said something uninteresting, however his words from right now couldn't be overlooked, as expected. Just what did he, who was just recently summoned to Little Garden, know regarding Sun Authorities?

Homura who took out his phone pointed at the logo attached on it.

"This Sun trademark.....It came to me when I looked at this symbolic logo of "Everything Company". You people or the gods of Little Garden, unless some kind of legend or an organization that has been bestowed a banner acts as intermediary, I think that you can't intervene with our world."

Moon Rabbit, Shirayuki-hime, Minotaur, Bull of Heaven.

Even though all of them are legends of outer world, they are accepted in Little Garden as if natural. This is a proof that Little Garden and the Outer World mutually interfere with each other, and also a proof that they interfered with the outer world's past.

"I should have noticed when I, who was living in the 21st Century was summoned here. The Gods of Little Garden are interfering with not just the past, but every era including the modern era from our point of view. No, rather, it's possible to interfere with the past, so there's no reason not to interfere with the present."

While he said so, honestly, it was a blind spot. But if you think about it, it was only natural.

Between the past and present, the only difference is whether it can be observed or not, and fundamentally they are the same.

Queen crossed her legs with a little interest and answered Homura's question.

"That's right. When we Divine Spirits interfere with the outer world, we make sure to do it through human organizations in some kind of form. Religious organizations are typical examples, but there are also deep relationships with the countries and organizations that lend the banners."

"For example, like the Union Flag of Great Britain?"

To Homura's question, it was Scathach who replied with a nod.

"That's how it is. The Red Dragon Flag of Wales is the same, and so is the staff of two serpents of the World Health Organization. The Crest of Ayato's "Everything Company" is also modeled after the Sun, right? That is a symbol given in exchange for our support during the dawn of Zaibatsu. As for the era, it was sometime soon after the war, I believe."

Suddenly, Homura searched his memories. If I recall correctly, the staff of two serpents of World Health Organization was a symbol related to Greek Mythology.

"Still.....It's quite startling that you interfere even with the international organizations."

"Of course, there are several hurdles in order to focus and fix the interfered reality. I think that this Gift Game is also part of that."

".....Even the fact that the "Bull of Heaven" raged in the world?"

"No. The fact that Star Particle Bodies would rescue the world."

That, in other words, also meant that the result of Saigou Homura saving the world was arranged beforehand. Homura who deepened his conviction after listening to that, emphasized the ending and continued.

"Now, let's get back to the topic. Queen wants to make me fight the one who produced the "Bull of Heaven". So in other words——this is because the competitor who is participating in the Sun Authority Game and the one who abused the Particle Bodies is the same person, right?"

Queen nodded in silence, and urged him to continue with gesture.

"And paradoxically, those who aim at the Star Particle Bodies is highly likely to be party involved in the Sun Authority War. I have few clues regarding that. If you like, I can present you the banner that party is using as their symbol right at this moment."

As expected, with this, even Scathach and Queen exchanged glances. there was a few seconds gap, but neither of them raised an objection. They probably judged that it wasn't bad as the point of compromise of the story.

It's not like the girls wanted to needlessly decrease the researchers of Star Particle Bodies.

Homura took out his phone, opened the image folder and prepared so that he could immediately present it.

"If it's just showing you a picture, I can do it right at this moment. However, if you want detailed data, it would be impossible unless I got to my laboratory.....So, how is it? Is it still weak as a hand?"

"Let's see. It's still weak for me to tell you the answer to the Gift Game."

"But Queen. We can't afford to reject him and let the Buddhism take all the good parts. Neither the Star Particle Bodies, or this raw ore."

Lord Butler looked at Homura with an amused grin on her face. At that moment, Homura was assaulted by freezing chills down his spine. This gaze that was just like when a child discovered an interesting toy, Homura had experienced it before. Even this woman who looked diligent at first glance was fundamentally the same kind of person as Queen.

Queen rested her arms on the table and suspiciously looked at Homura.

".....It doesn't seem like he can be polished into a brilliant warrior. Are you saying you can polish him?"

"I'm not confident, but I think I want to take the challenge. Fortunately, I've been blessed with the disciples until now. I had Sétanta^[1] for armed might, Ayato for ability.....But I was thinking it was about time to have about one disciple who was powerless but excelled in wisdom and courage."

Is that so, Queen answered frankly. Since there were no objections, it seems the conversation had been settled between them.

While Scathach swung her long plait to the right, she walked up to Homura and announced while showing the same gentle smile as before.

"Homura-kun. Let's accept some of your opinion. Until this Sun Authority Game ends, I will be training you. How about that?"

"Ah, No.....Sorry, but how do I say it, Slashing and striking isn't my strong point, or should I say, I'm poor at it."

“Oh, haven’t you heard from Kuro Usagi? That Gift Games are things that test three things that are power, wisdom and courage, so as long as you have courage and wisdom, you would have enough chances to aim for the win, you know?”

“..... So, teaching the beginner the ways to fight in Games?”

“That’s how it is. If you have questions, I will answer them, and if you have something to say, I would listen. Also the participation with might.....Well just a bit would be fine.”

How about it? The Lord Butler announced proudly while putting her hands on her waist.

Just for an instant, Homura hesitated towards Scathach’s proposal. He was thankful for getting the backing in this fight, however he couldn’t help that this woman smelled of danger. She looked normal at a glance, but Homura instinctively felt that she was undoubtedly the same kind of person as Queen. And above all, that awkward smile that Ayato who was sociable towards anyone showed, seemed like it was indicating the hidden true nature of this woman.

(I want information, but I want to have low risks.But I’m asking for something too good to be true, huh.)

Nothing ventured, nothing gained, is what they say. More than anything, first thing to do now is to remove the threat.

“More than this is luxury, huh? —Understood. From now, I will study under you regarding Gift Games.”

“Oh, suddenly the polite speech? Being more frank would be fine, you know?”

“It’s a issue of preparedness. What is necessary to receive the teachings is obedience and respect. In order to show respect towards who you are studying under, it’s best to start from superficial parts.”

Saigou Homura straightened up and gave a bow.

Scathach with swaying plait and wide eyes, her voice trembled as if moved.

“O-Ohh.....! D-Did you hear that, Queen! This was the first time in my life that I have been told such admirable words from my disciple! No, really, it’s a

phrase I want to make the other stupid disciples hear a million times.....!!!”

Scathach looked up at the heavens with emotion and sadness. Apparently she seems to have quite a lot of disciples. After expressionlessly watching her state, Queen gave a small mutter.

“.....Hmm. It’s good that you are diligent, but be careful as much as you can. Her training policy is that of a Spartan, but on the other hand, she is very lax on caring after someone.”

“L-Lax?”

“Yes, lax. Also, I’ll just say this beforehand, but there’s no point in asking questions about Ayato.”

“.....Why?”

“I don’t mean anything bad. That girl is special to Japanese people, even with parts that are not related to Zaibatsu. It would be better for both if you didn’t know until the appropriate time comes.”

From Queen’s words, Homura became even more puzzled. As expected, he couldn’t find any kind of explanation to her current words. What did she mean by her being special to Japanese people rather than just Saigou Homura himself?

Queen elegantly brushed the hair on the back of her head and brought the tea to her mouth and said in slightly good mood.

“But, that’s right. You can teach him to a harmless degree. Explain it to him.”

“Understood. —By the way, Homura-kun, how far do you know regarding “Halloween”?”

“Just the surface. In short, Queen is the personification of the Autumn Obon, right?”

—The moment he said that, Queen’s face instantly became sullen. Her state as she glared at Homura with knitted brows was just like a warm spring changing into a freezing winter.

Homura had his expression frozen as he didn’t know what served as a landmine. Looking at the situation, he was under the delusion that this moment

became his death. Regarding his speech, he should have been allowed to speak freely last time, so the landmine he stepped on was something else.

Carefully, Homura asked in order to defuse the landmine.

“.....Errr. Could it be that you dislike it being called Obon?”

“I hate it. After all, it doesn’t have a nice ring to it. It’s not a big mistake, but don’t say it from now on.”

Queen turned her face away with a pout.

Homura didn’t really understand her sensitiveness, but it is not good to force what she dislikes. Homura kept in mind once more that there might be landmines somewhere, and started once again.

“I got it, then I’ll put it differently. To explain it simply, it’s the Festival of Celts that overlaps the view of life and death with the changing of the seasons.....is that right, Scathach-san?”

“Call me Sensei. Because everyone calls me that. But for someone from 21st Century, you are quite well-informed.Could it be that you know my legend as well?”

“Umm, sorry. I don’t know. It’s just that as a custom of the orphanage, it was a rule to magnificently enjoy Halloween. Because Halloween was the number one favorite festival for the founder.”

Homura spoke those words full of deep respect and affection.

Founder of the “Canaria Family Home” orphanage——was a girl whose background beyond her name, Canaria, was unknown, and the festival that someone like her passionately loved was Halloween.



In present day Japan, there was no other festival as widely favored as Halloween where both adults and kids could participate to their hearts content. Of course, there were large-scale festivals like Nebuta, Tenjin and Gion that were performed in regions, but only three festivals, Halloween, Christmas and New Year were well-favored in Japan as a whole.

In a sense, those words of Homura were loaded with respect towards Queen—but for some reason, the two averted their gaze with sad looks in their eyes.

“.....Is that so? So that girl was always appreciating Halloween even in the outer world.”

“Huh?”

“Nevermind. But, right. There is no doubt that the modern Halloween festival has been arranged for public festivals. In reality, Governing life and death, stars and their boundaries is the spirit rank of Queen. From the spirits of the dead Queen came across, Ayato—would be a bit different. In a word, “Soul of a baby who couldn’t be born” was given a body and made to reincarnate. In order to come in contact with the one engaged with Star Particle Bodies—In other words, Homura-kun, as the member of “Everything Company”.”

“Then Ayato’s previous existence.....was she a miscarried child?”

“That’s not it. If it was that, I would say that, wouldn’t I? Since I intentionally made it vague, make an adequate judgment.”

Scathach momentarily directed a severe gaze at him. It appeared that he shouldn’t touch that part. From the vagueness of the topic, there seems to be a reason why it could considerably hurt feelings.

But it is enough to hear that much. Homura sighed out of relief.

“I see.....But, I’m glad. I was wondering whether she was forced, but given the current reason, I can understand why Ayato obeyed Queen. So, Queen is something like a benefactor for her?”

That was constantly weighing on his mind. Scathach who became aware of the basis of Homura’s worries, widened her eyes from increasing surprise, and then showed a heartfelt gentle smile.

“I’m surprised. Instead of acting, you are really diligent, huh. You have to cherish that sincerity of yours, okay? It would become an opportunity for villains to take advantage of, however it would become the strongest weapon against the Devils and monsters.”

“I-Is that so?”

“Yes, that is so. Ayato lacks in that aspect, so compensate for it. That girl is talented and honest.....But she’s too pure, and easily gets caught up in silly traps.”

She’s someone who makes a blunder at last second, Lord Butler gave an advice with a raised index finger. He certainly felt like he could understand it. She had strong and honest sense of justice, however she had a weak point of living a life of a sheltered girl. That’s probably what she wanted to say by ‘too pure’.

“However I wouldn’t have met Ayato if not for Queen, and the continuance of the orphanage would also be at risk. I think that just for the fact that I discovered such connection, I’m glad to have met Queen.”

“That’s right. Everything is thanks to me. Aren’t I generous?”

“Yes, you are.However, was it fine to let Ayato go alone?”

“There’s no problem. She was lenient because of too much peace, so her head cooled down after experiencing some pain, right? If that girl becomes serious and goes for the victory, even the warriors of Celtic Pantheon who could oppose her are limited in number. Speaking of just her natural abilities, she has an outstanding talent comparable to Sétanta.”

Fufun, Scathach showed her good mood. Probably her true character leaked out because Ayato, who was both her subordinate and disciple, wasn’t present.

Homura released a bit of his tension, sat down as if the power left him and leaned his back on the chair.

Suddenly, Homura raised his face as if he remembered something.

“That reminds me, Queen. Leaving aside participation in the Sun Authority War, would there be some kind of reward?”

Queen suddenly stopped the hand she was drinking tea with and looked at Homura.

Her narrowed gaze fixed at Homura contained extraordinary sharpness. He wiped his sweat wondering if this was a landmine, but Queen once again sipped her black tea without showing signs of harm.

Was that some kind of a sign? Scathach revealed a wry smile and stepped forth.

“Homura-kun. I’m not sure what reward is it that you seek.....But you should naturally be able to understand what the reward is if you win and advance to the next round of this Sun Authority War.”

“.....So you are saying to win this first match without thinking about anything for now?”

“That’s how it is. It’s good that you understand quick. Well, at the moment of clearing this preliminary Game, Some kind of big change should happen around you. Look forward to that for now.”

Putting her hand on her lips, Scathach winked playfully at him. That kind of maiden-like behavior was unexpectedly suitable for her, perhaps she was still young mentally.

More than anything, first comes the victory.

Queen and Scathach told him that it was the number one prerequisite.

It was at that moment when the Spirit Train violently shook due to attack from the outside.

*

The deck of the train turned into a battlefield where iron arrows rained incessantly. It was Asterius who knocked down ballista arrowheads that were flying from every direction all at once, and the warriors from “Six Scars” who indomitably responded with rapid fire.

It was an equal fight, but neither side was allowed to make even a single blunder. If he began to destroy the ballista raised on the deck, “Six Scars” would

be quickly disadvantaged.

The preparations to cut the last wagon in order to increase the rotation rate even by a bit was still under preparations.

“Archers who finished reloading raise the flag!”

“Release all the spare ballista arrowheads!”

“Just a little more before we enter the Ley Line! We’ll get away without fail!”

The Beastmen raised brave voices to motivate themselves. The enemy was skilled enough to endure this fierce attack. If they got inside the wagon, they would split it in one go. If that happens, it would be the end.

Suzuka wiped the raindrops and sweat that overflowed from tension, and continued to think.

(We’ve been had. I thought they would stop even for an instant, but they don’t stop at all. When I thought they stopped, they were outside of range.)

Mmmm, Suzuka crossed her hands with a troubled expression. She didn’t talk to Ayato about it, there was one more spectacular move hiding in her Gift. If all went well, it was possible to completely overturn this rivaling battle.

However, there’s also part that the enemy already became aware of her range. The poor plan of recklessly leaping and coming back can’t be done anymore.

(~.....So, we’re in a deadlock, huh? It was for the future, but it can’t be helped!)

Alright! She abandoned the new tactics and fired herself to continue with the current one. Being able to easily maintain good attitude even though the Game progress didn’t go as she planned was her good point. Because if she messed up here, it could become an opening.

Asterius on the other hand was having a hard fight against several opponents due to the bad maneuverability of the great battleaxe. If he had a trident or a longsword in hand, he would’ve cut through it long time ago.

White Tiger bared his fangs in irritation and dug his claws in the atmosphere.

『Just because we can't move forward too much, they are sure doing as they please. There's also the alternative of just destroying all of the participants, Bull Monster.』

“There's no such choice. If I do that, everything would stay as a mystery.”

Asterius had a reason to meet Homura at any cost.

If he won without clearing up the meaning behind salvation, it would be an unsatisfying win like small bones getting stuck in the throat. Something like that can't be allowed.

While setting up his great battleaxe, he overlooked from the sky wondering if there was no way to capture it.

“Now that things come to this, the enemy's hand is also exposed. It's clear that enemy's side has someone with the Gift of transfer in them. It seems the range is around 120m, however it seems they can “transfer the fired ballista arrowheads”. If we stop our feet within the range, it's inevitable that our heads would be shot.”

Since he understood that much, the capture strategy was clear. In short, the number of people wasn't enough. If there was one more strong person, raiding that iron fortress was an easy job.

“Tiger Deity. Is that comrade of yours still not coming? How long are they going to make us wait?”

『Yes, they kept you waiting. It seems the rumored partner has arrived.』

As Tiger Deity revealed his fangs and smiled, the wind direction of the storm changed.

The eastern wind that was blowing to hold back the Spirit Train, started to blow from the west. Asterius was surprised from the sudden change, but there was no change to the cumulonimbus cloud of the “Bull of Heaven”. Nevertheless, just the direction of the wind brought a dramatic change.

Asterius quickly noticed that there was another practitioner there.

Asterius overlooked the surface trying to search for them—However, their presence appeared from the sky far above. Moreover, it didn't simply appear.

The moment that person who looked to be the practitioner spread their hands, they gathered all the rain and wind from around under them, and started changing it into spherical shape.

“.....Hey, Tiger Deity. Is that your partner, what are they doing?”

Asterius knit his brows from unpleasant premonition.

White Tiger who perceived what was going to happen after this, raised a flustered voice.

『This is bad.....! That foolish girl, does she plan to destroy the iron fortress!?』

“What!? Wait a minute, what about my situation!?”

『If that girl could worry about such things, my stomach would always be at peace!』

It appears that this Tiger Deity was suffering from the stomach-ache. There was quite serious feelings loaded in his shout. However, the practitioner didn't appear to be stopping her hands at all.

She who already collected hundreds of tons of rainwater, drew thousands of tons of water current from the great river, and accumulated enough wind power to warp the space, laughed while revealing fangs appearing as if she would release all of that any moment.

『Aah.....! We won't make it if we stop her now! Let's take a distance for the moment!!』

Asterius call to wait vanished within the windstorm. Asterius was flustered.

His objective was to meet the man called Saigou Homura, not to destroy the Spirit Train. She had to be stopped by all means, but the only one who could stop that practitioner at this place, was him who possessed the “Pseudo Divinity - Celestial Beast Thunder”. The lightning attack with released Divinity would most likely swallow up even that user, but the circumstances didn't allow otherwise.

The problem was the White Tiger after bringing down that practitioner.

If this Celestial beast who still hasn't showed his hand becomes serious, then

even Asterius who holds Divinity Arms might be at disadvantage.

(But there's no other way!Do I have no other choice!?)

The lightning dwelled in the battleaxe. Since it become like this, there was no other choice but to kill both the White Tiger and the practitioner in one go. He was still hiding his power now, but he had no spare energy to make enemies out of a Celestial Beast.

He put feet on White Tiger's back planning to part from him.

—It happened at that moment.

From the deck of the Spirit Train "Sun Thousand", a single beam of flash traveled as if to pierce the sky. The polished arrow that seemed like it could pierce the opponent even a thousand miles away, plunged forward as if making its way through the gaps of raging water currents and the windstorm, and splendidly sent the head of the practitioner flying.

".....Wha-!"

Asterius became speechless. It was a pierce suitable enough to be called a special move.

If this was simply a technique to fly through the distance, there were numerous of them in this Little Garden.

However, to see through this raging storm, and to take the enemy's head in the midst of them being protected by the constantly changing fluid with just a single arrow was a bow skill that couldn't be called anything but divine.

Should he be raising praises, or should he be astonished by the enemy's threat. While holding down his excitement, Asterius directed his line of sight towards the deck.

There was just a single warrior standing above the deck of the Spirit Train.

It was a girl with swaying golden hair that didn't lose its shine even in this storm, directing an angry glare towards them.

Casting aside her usual mask and exposing her expression of a warrior, Queen's Knight—Kudou Ayato, stood before one person and one beast.

1 The given name of [Cú Chulainn](#). ↩

Chapter 6

Due to Crete island receiving a direct hit from the Typhoon #link24, it became a no entry zone for normal people and became partly uninhabited. It was believed that that was because repair works were ongoing, however that was just a means to cover the truth.

At any rate, on the Crete island seen by Izayoi and co who actually went there, there was not a single person remaining. Despite it being an island with a territory of about half of Shikoku, there were no visible traces of someone staying there recently. It was proof that they started an immediate evacuation after the hit of the Typhoon #link24.

The palm trees along the coast were scattered in a broken state, and the stands were destroyed and commodities abandoned. The characteristically white townscape was completely empty, the only sound being the echos of the wind and sea..

The fact that the signs of the evacuation were left intact meant that no one had been on this island since the recommendation was issued.

Izayoi kicked the palm tree blocking the way flying and smiled amusingly.

“Quarantined diseased island, is it? As expected, it seems that Crete has been covered in the virus. There’s not a soul here.”

“What’s going on?”

“I already told you about fighting with the Minotaur, right? At that time, it was a monster integrated with the labyrinth and didn’t give off any signs of intellect, however when I met it once more, it seemed to have intellect although only a bit. —With that, I noticed it. The fact that due to some reason, the Minotaur could be turning back into a human.”

As he kicked yet another tree flying, the three headed straight towards their destination.

Tokuteru inquired while being swarmed by insects for some reason.

“I see. And how is that connected to the pandemic on Crete?”

“It could be the result of me trying to change the way of deciphering the legend of Minotaur. In case Minotaur is a turned monster, there should be a reason behind its changing.”

Inside the myth, there is a big separation on whether its divinity and monster nature is something innate or acquired. The former was mostly formed by the world concept itself, while the latter was mostly due to the actions while alive. It could be concluded that the Minotaur that became a monster after being given a human name is a typical turned monster.

Prith warned the swarm of insects saying “You can’t enter that place”, and nodded as if giving consent.

“Hm. Speaking of which, there’s something I want to ask. Would someone like Demon Lord Balor from the Celtic Pantheon become the representative example of that?”

“The guy who dominated other races with Black Death, huh? That is also an acquired divinity by means of the disease.”

Izayoi who kicked the third broken tree flying, lightly sprayed the insect spray that he prepared just in case, and then tossed it towards Tokuteru.

As Tokuteru, who was swarmed by a lot of insect, gave his thanks, he sprayed large quantity the insect repellent spray and continued talking.

“Ah, so, it’s that? You are thinking that what summoned the two Bull Monsters that were the origins of the disease, have relation to this land, right?”

“Yeah. Or somewhere in the southern Iraq. The gods of Little Garden have to use a place that is connected to them in some way in order to interfere with the outer world, right? I think that these two are most plausible as the..... candidates!”

He sent fourth and fifth trees flying.

He was being considerate in his own way, kicking the trees to the side of the road, but it seems the impact was a bit too strong. The bees that barely kept

their nests within the storm became enraged and rushed towards Tokuteru all at once.

Glancing back at Tokuteru who began to fight back at the palm nest in a fluster, Izayoi and Prith smoothly proceeded forward and arrived towards their goal.

“So, this means that this place——Crete ruins “Knossos Palace” is suspicious, huh?”

As the two arrived at the Palace that was their place of destination, they mutually started to survey the surroundings.

They were the ruins reputed as one of the highest class in the existing Bronze Age, however now it continued to fade, and the scars that were unable to be hidden were visible everywhere. However the traces of repairs could also be seen, and despite everything, the past glory of the white wall palace that could be overlooked from the entrance could still be felt.

Surely, one of the reasons for that was the lack of tourists.

Perhaps every civilization that has remained for thousands of years after the disappearance of the mankind, its ground may turn into similar scenery. If you thought about it like that, it could be considered to be a scenery filled with sorrow.

Tokuteru who arrived later than the two, put his hands on his waist a little proudly as he dodged all the fierce attacks of the bees.

“I-I got the grasp on the story. Now, shall we split up to search whether there’s something suspicious here?”

“That’s not necessary. My partner arrived at the palace before us.”

Hou? Tokuteru and Prith raised their voices at the same time. They heard the story, but it seemed that the temple he spoke of referred to the Knossos Palace.

It was immediately after that when the whirlwinds formed in the sky of Mediterranean Sea. The giant figure of a bird was reflected in the sky traveling at high speed.

Prith put herself on guard thinking it was an enemy, however Izayoi and

Tokuteru were different.

Izayoi smiled as if amazed, while Tokuteru looked up at the sky in surprise. Tokuteru who went to meet the giant shadow that steadily approach, raised his voice as if convinced.

“Are you..... the Gryphon from back then! My my, this is quite nostalgic!”

『It has been a while, Tokuteru-dono. I'm glad that you are in good health.』

The one descending while raising the whirlwinds, was their acquaintance, the Eudemon, “Gryphon” with the upper half of an eagle and lower half of a lion. The Gryphon that dashed as if treading on the atmosphere moved his legs back and forth and swooped down as if descending from a ladder, and respectfully bowed his head.

With a wave of his wrist, Tokuteru excused him from using polite speech, and asked about the situation.

“Hahaa. So you went ahead and came here first, huh? Certainly, you as a Gryphon you will have a lot of advantage in seeing the land of Greece. However, I can't really say that it's good to be using that form in the outer world. —Or did something happen?”

Tokuteru's gaze turned sharp and he looked at the lower half of the Gryphon.

Looking closely, his hind foot appeared to be broken.

『Yes. I confirmed that the place deemed to be a gateway with Little Garden to be in the throne room.....But after that I was attacked by an unforeseen enemy, and arrived at current situation. Please be careful. The enemy was quite skilled.』

Saying that, the Gryphon tiredly sat down. Izayoi tried to approach in a hurry, but Prith came forth before him and touched his injury.

“It's terrible. The bone is broken. It should've hurt just by walking normally.”

“Prith. Take care of him. It wouldn't do to leave him like this.”

『I'm truly ashamed.』

Gryphon once again bowed his head. Izayoi who looked at that with a grim

face, approached with big steps and told him briefly.

“.....My bad, Gry. I should’ve arrived sooner without relying on things like planes.”

『Don’t say the absurd. It was my judgment to come here on my own. You can’t be blamed for it, right?』

“But thanks to you I avoided the surprise attack. That alone is already plenty as a result. —Rest without worries. I’ll pay them back ten thousand fold.”

Yahaha, Izayoi laughed while the Gryphon called Gry also returned a wide smile.

It was unnecessary to worry too much about him who still smiled like this despite receiving a serious injury. Right now, he should only think about returning the debt of receiving that injury.

“Well then, I guess this is farewell with Prith. Sorry, but I’ll be leaving this guy with you. I’ll immediately come to pick him up after I complain to Queen.”

“Please do so.Don’t be careless you two.”

Seen off by Prith, Izayoi and Tokuteru advanced towards the throne room located deep inside the Knossos Palace.

The Knossos Palace that was the greatest historic ruin of Bronze Age, had a somewhat complicated structure. This structure that couldn’t be traveled easily by foot was as if it was teaching that a labyrinth referred to things like this. The two who arrived at the throne room of Knossos Palace that could be called the world’s oldest throne, had immediately noticed an abnormal situation. When Tokuteru drew the pattern in the air that represented his Divinity, a crack that could be visualized appeared in the empty space.

It was a clear crack that was far greater in size compared to the time when he connected to Little Garden from Shibamata Taishakuten and was done far easily.

It might have been fortunate that people have been kept away. With such a dangerous crack in the Palace that is a tourist spot of Crete, there would be no

end to cases of being spirited away.

After Izayoi and Tokuteru exchanged glances, they both jumped into the crevice.

As they did so, the situation took a sudden turn and their view was filled with multicolored aurora. The aurora that advanced like wave couldn't be obstructed even if they closed their eyes. As the aurora illuminated every part of their bodies, their view suddenly cleared up.

The two of them that were summoned on a point 4000m in the skies didn't show any particular surprise as they entrusted their bodies to the free fall. It was something they both had experienced many times. There was nothing surprising at this point.

They overlooked the scenery below while being shaken by the cool wind.

The place they were summoned was a giant labyrinth that extended until the horizon. The labyrinth that was divided by white walls had diverse paths ranging from small roads to vast plazas.

Izayoi and Tokuteru who dropped down near the Altar that seemed to be the center of the great labyrinth, landed sprawled on the ground and raised the dust. Nevertheless, when you look at their uninjured states, it can be seen that neither of them are normal.

As the two of them cleared away the surrounding dust, they looked at the Altar of the central hall where they fell down and immediately understood just where they have landed.

"Ah, I see. Apparently, we seem to have invaded the labyrinth from the destination, Tokuteru."

"Seems like it. Is the center of that Altar a gateway?"

The two of them looked at the throne at the center of Altar. No matter how you looked at that old throne made of stone, it was the world's oldest throne of the Crete Palace they saw some time ago. Originally, this Altar would have been a mechanism to transfer Saigou Homura to the outside simultaneously with clearing the Game.

Izayoi laughed and shook his head left and right.

“Oh man, I’m beaten. I didn’t expect it to be a gateway to return to the outer world from the side of Little Garden. Given this, I wouldn’t be able to return even if the Game was cleared, would I?”

“Well, that’s how it is if you think about it normally. It is difficult to return to the side of Little Garden unless there is something that would serve as a key.”

“I see, I see. Then, I will think about that without reserve——But for now, I’ll endure it by settling the score with those bunch.”

He narrowed his eyes and looked at the Altar with discernment.

Izayoi frankly said without trying to conceal his hostility.

“Stop hiding and come out already. Or are you in the middle of preparing a surprise to meet us? If that’s the case, I’ll only wait for three minutes. Recite prayers together with the surprise.”

Izayoi who started to walk slowly, glared at the Altar and the throne with angry eyes. Although he did say he would wait, he didn’t say he wouldn’t cause harm.

It was an absurd reasoning from an outsider’s perspective, however there was no need to keep manners with the outlaws. To hell with the overnight grudges. Since his comrade received the surprise attack, it would be better to settle the score even a moment faster. There would be plenty of time for the matter about Homura and Suzuka after smashing the faces of the assailants.

Izayoi walked with forceful steps thinking if he should just pulverize the Altar and all. Perhaps that inconvenient spirit of his was transmitted to them.

The assailants that were hiding undercover showed themselves all at once.

“.....You got us. Even though we returned him alive out of mercy, it seems we are hated quite a bit.”

The two silhouettes appeared from behind the throne with amazed voices.

The one who raised the voice was a youth with characteristic blue hair. His age was perhaps around Homura and co’s age or perhaps a bit older. In his hands was the hard bow clad in lightning.

He hypothesized that it was a Divine Weapon, but he didn't know what Divinity it was. But looking at his specialized weapon, it didn't seem like he was the one who did a surprise attack on Gry.

Izayoi disregarded that youth, and looked at the other person standing beside him.

“.....Hey, the lady-killer over there. Were you the one who attacked the Gryphon?”

“Now, I wonder about that?”

He was a handsome man who wore linen clothes and had imposing bull horns growing under his black glossy hair. He appeared to be in the latter twenties to him, but he was a bull monster with horns.

Judging from his slightly worn out tone, it was obvious that he was faking his age, and it was understood just by a glance that he was someone powerful. It was true for the “Bull of Heaven” of this time, but those who carried the legends associated with “Bulls” were mostly strong in general. If they also held Divinity like god's envoy or the avatar of a chief god, they were mostly referred to as Monsters or Demon Lords. The “Horned Animals” like a bull or deer is a symbol of a powerful person and it tends to be seen as an object of faith in all the countries of the world.

Judging that carelessly approaching the bull monster and the youth who held a Divine Weapon, Izayoi stopped his feet before the stairs leading to Altar.

(.....Hm. It seems Gry wasn't simply taken by surprise.)

Both of them—were much stronger than he thought.

Izayoi held down his anger and collected himself.

It seems, “Letting him return alive” they said before wasn't a lie. It would be difficult to retreat by oneself while having such powerful people, and two at that, as opponents. Without a doubt, both of them were equal to a Demon Lord. Izayoi put his hands to his waist, and glared at the Altar along with a deep sigh.

“—So then. Where's the third one?”

Both the black and blue haired youths were slightly surprised.

The handsome man in particular looked at Izayoi while laughing in amusement.

“I see, I see. You have quite a keen eye. I think that fellow was concealing herself quite well, but it seems she wasn’t able to hide. You became quite a youth with a bright future.”

“.....Hmm? I believe this is our first meeting though?”

“Indeed. It is our first meeting. But I believe you have met my sworn siblings. —So? Have Kouryuu and Karyou been well?”

For an instant, Izayoi widened his eyes as if taken aback.

Kouryuu and Karyou that the horned handsome man spoke of, were the Saurian Demon King and Roc Demon King—part of the Seven Great Demon Kings from the Journey to the West.

The seven Demon Kings belonging to the community called “Seven Great Sages” created by the “Great Sage Equalling Heaven”, Sun Wukong, were said to be the companions who exchanged the vows of siblinghood.

However after clearing up the crimes they committed as Demon Kings, Kouryuu and Karyou were now engaged in protection of Little Garden, and were also close to Sakamaki Izayoi.

All other five Demon Kings aside from these two also held great power, however the names of the two who were considered their leaders were so famous that their names were well known throughout heaven and earth.

And among the Demon Kings included in “Seven Great Sages”, there was just one Demon King with bull horns.

And he was the legendary Great Demon King who was equal to “Great Sage Equalling Heaven”, Sun Wukong. And the name of brave warrior, who once challenged the countless gods in order to save his sworn sister, and fought in order to “Pacify the Heaven” for the oppressed Monsters, was—

““Great Sage Who Pacifies Heaven”.....! So, you are the head of the seven siblings, the legendary Bull Demon King!?”

“Indeed! It is I who is the eldest brother of Seven Sages, as well as the one who controls the monsters spread throughout China!—Haha. I hear my siblings have been in your care during the fight with the Three Headed Dragon, Sakamaki Izayoi.”

His tone was calm, however the ferocious fangs could be seen from time to time, unable to be concealed by the smile on his face.

Unable to suppress his aggressiveness at all, the Bull Demon King took out his specialized weapon which was a club with long handle, His glossy black hair started to trembled along with his soaring fighting spirit, and he gazed at Izayoi with red eyes.

“After hearing about heroic deeds of You and my siblings, I wanted to have a go with you once. I couldn’t get the chance until now, but it seems the opportunity has come now. —Surely, you don’t intend to refuse, do you?”

“Well, I clearly also want to straightforwardly say “Let’s have a go by all means!”, however.....”

It was an unusual hesitation from Izayoi. No, he was troubled from the bottom of his heart. After all, it was a challenge from the world-famous Great Demon King. Refusing it would be too rude, and honestly speaking, it was wasteful.

He wasn’t really doing his duty for his siblings Kouryuu and Karyou, and he not feel like asking what organization the opponent was at this time, but now, there’s the disgrace of his comrade he has to pay back first.

It was too heavy of a burden to bear.....but then, he suddenly remembered about the person behind him.

It may be good to leave the repaying for the humiliation ten thousand fold to Tokuteru. It would be interesting to see the strong points of the strongest war god Indra—Is what Izayoi thought, however...

However Tokuteru’s expression was so stiff from the received shock that he couldn’t talk of something so frivolous.

The current conversation didn’t reach Tokuteru’s ears. His gaze was fixed directly at the blue-haired youth.

This is absurd.....Tokuteru muttered to himself as he shook his head left and right, denying the person before his eyes. Unable to bear such gaze of Tokuteru, the blue-haired youth quickly averted his eyes.

It seems they had their own complicated circumstances. As he reconsidered whether he should take them all on since the situation became like that, a new high-pitched laughter resounded within the labyrinth.

Judging from that laugh, it unmistakably belonged to a girl.

The girl who burst out laughing, unable to endure looking at this situation, appeared on the throne without a prior notice just like mist, and revealed herself before Izayoi and Tokuteru.

“Fu, fufu.....Oh, this is too interesting! Isn’t it, Bull Demon King! I of all people didn’t foresee this kind of development at all! To think that Indra would show such a bewildered face! I’m an old friend, but this is truly my first time seeing such expression of his.....!!!”

They one that appeared like mist and held her sides with laughter was a mysterious woman——no, by outward appearance, it’s more appropriate to call her a young girl.

Her age was even younger than Homura’s group. However, whilst she was developing, her soft, silken body would arouse the opposite sex just with visible skin. Her thick yellow gown gave off divine vibes, but it didn’t resemble any of the cultural clothing that Izayoi was aware of.

Even from afar, he could understand that it was made of a high quality Eudemon leather, but anything beyond that was unknown. Perhaps, it was the work of a skill of a divine level judging from the level of it’s dying. It was difficult to discern her true identity from personal belongings.

Just like the Bull Demon King, this girl also had horns growing out of her head, however he was able to understand that they weren’t cow horns. Perhaps, she was different race from the Bull Demon King——He didn’t want to think about it, but perhaps she was from the pure-blooded dragon species.

The Bull Demon King that she addressed sighed as if disappointed, put the club on his shoulder and stepped back.

“.....I don’t sympathize with Indra, but there’s nothing wrong with that. I too have experienced a similar thing once. I can easily guess his inner state.”

“Fufu, is that so? You also had your son taken by Buddhism, huh.Un, sorry. My joke went a bit too far, my comrade.”

“I don’t mind. It’s already in the past. —Leaving that aside, World King. Wasn’t the plan to introduce ourselves if you decided to show your face?”

“You mean, I should name it?”

“Of course. It would be chipping our good points if we, who are the guest leaders do it instead. The name of our alliance, announce it loudly!”

Bull Demon King took one more step back with a smile. The Girl of Dragon race called the World King, coughed in an unnatural way, stood on the throne and raised both hands.

Izayoi put himself on guard and started preparing for battle. Supposing that she is a pure-blooded dragon species. In other words, one of the strongest species. If he were to fight with her, he must be prepared for a mortal combat.

The girl called World King, as if boasting, and also, with amusement, spoke the name of her community.

“Now, let me name ourselves once more. —Listen well, Oh great hero of the end! And the defender King of Buddhism! We are Ten Heavenly Thrones, assembled in order to take part in Sun Authority War and overcome the “Kali Yuga”!

“Avatāra” is our name! We are the group of the strongest kings, supervising the current Authority War!!!”

As the World King pointed at the heavens, the giant flag fluttered behind the three of them.

On it was depicted a crown representing the ten kings, and the rotating ring that signified the movement of the sun. The World King puffed her chest going to narrate what meaning that flag held, however her wish didn’t come true.

The moment she pointed at the sky—the ground of the labyrinth started to tremble. The whistle sound so as to break the space rang out before long, and a giant Spirit train enough to cover the sky above the labyrinth came crashing down.



Chapter 7

—Inside the wagon of the Spirit Train, “Sun Thousand”.

Even now, the Spirit Train continued to dash under the dark clouds where thunders roared. They talked about leading the “Bull of Heaven” to a remote place, however they were compelled to stop that action due to the sudden assailants. Even if they wanted to escape, they must first defeat the enemy outside the train.

Homura who had finished the audience with Queen, tilted his head from the community spoken by the Lord Butler Scathach.

““Avatära”.....is it?”

“Yes.—The group of Kings, “Avatära”. That is the name of the community that is currently assaulting us. It’s about the ten Gods &Kings from the Indian Mythology, have you heard of it?”

“No, first time hearing it.”

“Is that so? Then I’ll give a brief explanation while we’re walking. Since it’s not unrelated to you.”

Slowing down her walking pace, Scathach raised her index finger. Homura wanted to go to Ayato’s side immediately, but he would be helpless without knowing about the enemy. He silently returned a nod.

“—The community of the Sun Kings, “Avatära”.

Ten incarnations of the sun spoken in the Ancient Indian Pantheon. Each of the ten own separate Gifts and are Divine Spirits as well as royalties, having acquired glory in their respective eras, they are charged with the mission of bringing peace upon the world.

Even in the Little Garden of gods, beings like the First Avatar “Arc”, Second Avatar “World Dragon Kurma” and Ninth Avatar “Siddhartha the Enlightened” could be counted on hand. If they participated in the Sun Authority War, they

would become the biggest winning candidates whom even “Queen Halloween” cannot touch.”

But Scathach softly denied that possibility.

“Those three who are the strongest battle power of “Avatära” aren’t likely to participate. And even if they do, their participation would be limited to being a “Sponsor”.”

““Sponsor”? Not the “Host” of the Game?”

“Yes. You haven’t heard? Three positions have been prepared for this Game.”

Scathach who raised three fingers explained about the three roles while walking.

“First, “Hosts” who were entrusted with the administration and management of Authority War.

Second, “Players” to participate and battle in Authority War.

Third, “Sponsors” who support the participants in the Authority War.

—The three abovementioned positions are available. In this case, Homura’s group are the “Players” and me and Queen are the “Sponsors”.”

Homura released a small sigh and digested Scathach’s words.

The fighters, and the supporters—It’s the kind of relationship where humans like Homura fight as Players, and the Gods bestow Gifts upon their heroes. No matter how powerful Divine Spirits they may be, if they don’t have excellent pieces they can’t win through it. That was also the reason why Queen was recruiting outstanding participants.

“Well, I thought it was like that.”

“You expected it?”

“Yes. Because my relationship with “Everything Company” is exactly that. While it’s true I came to another world, I don’t think that relationship would change so easily. —And, what kind of God is the “Sponsor” of Avatära?”

Returning to the topic, he asked about the main matter.

Scathach blinked her eyes out of surprise and told him with a smile.

“I believe that “Avatära” is the union community of Players and Sponsors. And this time, there’s also the age limit on Player frame.”

“Oh, that’s a really good news. How much to be specific?”

“Everyone aside minors are banned from participation. In the case of exceeding the age during the Game, you are promptly moved to a special case. Taking this into account, the time left for Sakamaki Izayoi to be able to participate is three months.”

“.....Eh?”

“Hm?”

“Oh, no.....sorry. Please go on.”

Homura leaked his voice from the unexpected name. Scathach continued while grinning.

“Judging from the current interference and other violent actions, the current “Avatära” isn’t the righteous group of Kings. Rumor has it that the Demon Lords who felt like taking part in Sun Authority War are gathering regardless of where they are from.”

“.....In other words, they are naming themselves “Avatära” just because they want to claim being a group of Kings?”

“Well, I can’t exactly declare it as such. I heard that at least a third of the ten Avatars of “Avatära” are participating. Naturally in that case, the ones who could become Sponsors are limited.”

First Avatar “Arc”.

Second Avatar “World Dragon Kurma”.

Ninth Avatar “Siddhartha the Enlightened”.

Among these three highest battle powers, one of them would certainly take part as a Sponsor.

“Well, supposing the Ninth Avatar who is the founder of Buddhism is innocent, the problem are the First and Second Avatars. However, if we were to speak about their awakening, the “Pisces” of Twelve Constellations and the

“Dragon” of Twelve Chen would be necessary.....But, we’ll find that out when the opening ceremony arrives so it’s fine. The problem are the members of “Avatära” that are interfering with your world. They are undoubtedly involved with the Star Particle Bodies.”

From Scathach’s words, Homura stopped his feet as if he didn’t believe his ears.

Looking puzzled at Scathach, Homura asked again, unable to comprehend the meaning.

“.....Please wait a minute. Why did the Star Particle Bodies appear there? I don’t understand how it’s connected.”

From Homura’s question, this time it was Scathach’s turn to be surprised.

“Oh, you haven’t heard from Ayato? About the Star Particle Body Spreading Plan.”

“.....Ah, you mean that? The pipe dream of performing the Terra healing by making full use of environmental improvement function of Star Particle Bodies?”

Saigou Homura revealed an amazed smile.

The Star Particle Body Spreading Plan, as the name suggested, was a romantic nonsense about building a large tower for spreading Particle Bodies around the world and helping to improve the environment of the planet. It certainly wasn’t impossible if it became possible to mass-produce the “Origin” and precisely control the movements of the Particle Bodies.

Desertificated lands, polluted atmosphere, rise of atmospheric temperature and so on.

If the Terra healing by Particle Bodies went smoothly, it was estimated that it would take only a mere three years to improve all that.

However, the problems before reaching that point were piled up to the height of a mountain.

The place to construct the tall tower for spreading them, the effects of Particle Bodies on human bodies, the fear of nanohazard, religious problems,

agreements with pro-environment groups, etc.....the number of problems were endless.

Even if all those were cleared, this time the production line wasn't ready.

If the Spreading Plan goes smoothly, in ten years time, 17% of the planet's atmosphere would be filled with Particle Bodies, however there's also the question as to how to produce such a large quantity of Particle Bodies.

As mentioned above, it took a vast amount of time to increase the production of "Origin", and the parasitic growth in living organisms only resulted in degraded products.

If there were human beings, animals or plants with idiosyncratic constitution that did not degrade the Particle Bodies with parasitic multiplication, that would be a different story—But something so convenient hadn't been discovered as of yet.

"Such an absurd plan is impossible even for "Everything Company". It's not a problem that would be solved by having money, isn't it? It can't earn a social understanding."

"Fufun, I wonder about that? At the very least, the global influence of the Star Particle Bodies will become considerably large with the current case. Half of the problems Homura-kun is worried of would be solved with that, right?"

To Scathach's smile, Homura returned a frown. That might be so.

It would be a great outcome to earn the chance to impress them and prove that instead of being harmful they were beneficial for the human body. When people's trust was gained, it would become easier to appeal to countries and organizations.

But even so, there was still that one final problem remaining.

If the production line wasn't set up, everything would be nothing but a pie in the sky.

Reading Homura's mind, Scathach raised her index finger and asked.

"Then, let's try changing our viewpoint. If we assume that all other problems have been cleared, where would you, Homura-kun, set up the spreading

establishment?”

Particle Body spreading establishment—Although Homura took the possibility of the “If” that Scathach spoke with a dubious expression, he still tried to diligently think about it.

Assuming that it was fully possible to secure the true “Origin” rather than the Particle Bodies of experimental stage.

At first, he would want a detailed data on environmental information.

Therefore for the first condition, he would need a land with a peaceful and mostly unchanging climate. Assuming one of them was set up at the Earth’s axis, the North Pole and South Pole, preferably it would have to be a land with no climate change due to the four seasons.

Taking all of that into consideration, if he had to build the spreading establishment—

“If it was me.....I would build the spreading establishment on the equator line.”

“Oh? On the equator line?”

Scathach continued walking without much change in her tone. Homura was driven by an ominous feeling while holding his chin with his hand. The reason didn’t require a lot of explaining.

This Sun Authority War should be a battle to compete with “Twelve Ecliptic Constellations” and “Twelve Chén of the Equator”.

Despite that, Scathach just now hinted that the Particle Bodies were involved in battle.

(No way, that’s just impossible! The Particle Body Spreading Plan—Environmental Control Tower project should have been at a standstill.....!)

Chills traveled down Homura’s spine. It happened the moment he was about to ask her what she was hinting at—.

The inside of the wagon was assaulted by a violent tremor that exceeded even that of a thunder.

Looking up, Scathach instantly stiffened her loose expression and her wariness increased.

“.....That green hand. Did she fail to kill the Bull Monster?”

“Eh?”

“Sorry, let’s halt the explanation of circumstances. This fellow is dangerous.”

Homura raised a disarrayed voice.

It was immediately after that, when the buoyancy with a sense of deja vu attacked him.

*

The violent attack released by Ayato scattered the fresh blood in the sky above the Spirit Train.

The head that was cut with a single arrow danced in the air with rotations. As if piercing the heavens, the arrow that read through the rainy wind headed straight and sent the head of the practitioner flying. That wasn’t a skill possible to do with a human body. It was an arrow which could be realized only when the user has trained in the martial arts to the level that would be called divine. It was inevitable that the practitioner who didn’t expect the counterattack was helpless against it.

Following it, she released three more arrows. All of them drew a trajectory of certain death and approached the headless body.

But firing arrows into the headless corpse was a deed even worse than hitting it with a rod. Since her head was sent flying and the activity of life ceased, there was no need to do anything else.

But she had a feeling of discomfort. The body with its head removed had stiffened up after being shot. The headless corpse staying immobile in the air—rather than falling down, it stopped in the sky.

“.....Tsk. Was I exposed?”

In a moment, the headless corpse moved.

The freshly severed head that fell down in rotation while drawing an arc was

caught with one hand and was attached to the body. The head and body merged as if nothing had happened and the injury healed instantly.

The practitioner who opened her eyes wide removed the robe that kept out the rainy wind and dispatched the seven jewels that had been manipulating fluids until some time ago.

The three arrows Ayato fired were stopped by the seven jewels traveling in the sky at high speed.

(.....So, she was alive after all.)

Confirming that her guess was correct, Ayato put away her Battle Bow. Since it was defended with the current timing, it would be difficult to pierce her from this distance. The opponent wasn't negligent like before either.

(White-furred Tiger Deity, and a body that wouldn't die even when chopping off the head. Also the jewels moving in the sky.I see. Is she the Chinese snob that Sensei spoke of?)

Ayato saw through the enemy's origins. Even in this broad world, there was only one legend to that, that was a perfect match. But if Ayato's prediction was correct, then the enemy would be equal to a Demon Lord.

However, if her memory served right, she was one of the Demon Lords who were sealed long ago. If that turned out to be true, you couldn't blame her even if she took the initiative. Ayato glared at the enemy without removing her vigilance.

However, the practitioner whose head was chopped off, didn't do anything in particular and instead followed the Spirit Train with her eyes while revealing a small smile.

From behind that practitioner came an amazed voice.

『You are late. What took you so long, Shen Gongbao^[1].』

"I couldn't help it. When I went to our appointed location "Underwood", it was already deserted.Rather, who is that guy on your back?"

She looked at Asterius with a rude but dubious expression.

Asterius also widened his eyes out of surprise.

“That’s my line. You are.....Shen Gongbao? From that Chinese mythology “Houshin Engi^[2]”?”

“Isn’t that obvious? I don’t think I’ve heard of another Shen Gongbao other than me?”

The girl named Shen Gongbao replied with an even prouder tone. Her tender face suitable to her age was peeking out of the short-cut hair. She had quite a few poking hairs, but that showed her young visible age even more.

However, the doubt grew even bigger with that. Asterius who was summoned as the gimmick of the Game wasn’t given the knowledge about Chinese mythology. Therefore, he wasn’t sure of the details—but wasn’t Shen Gongbao supposed to be a middle-aged hermit man?

Although Shen Gongbao still hadn’t removed her cheeky attitude, she could still understand Asterius’ confusion.

While scratching her head, she tiresomely pointed at the White Tiger.

“It seems you are also having some rude misunderstanding. The white-bearded dirty old hermit you are thinking of is the human form of that old White Tiger^[3], you know? I’m the real Shen Gongbao!!!.....Even if I complained over and over as such, Zhou^[4] and my close aids couldn’t see me as anything but a young girl.”

『Saying dirty is going too far. Isn’t it all due to your lack of dignity? That’s why you were misunderstood.』

Oh shut it, Shen Gongbao turned her face away with a click of her tongue. Finally, the doubt was cleared with that.

“Houshin Engi” where Shen Gongbao was depicted—was one of the exceedingly new legends which came into existence in the Ming period of China. This “Houshin Engi” where new and old Taoist gods and immortals mixed up and fought, was a legend, the period of which is said to be uncertain, however there was a reason for that.

This “Houshin Engi”, similar to the “Journey to the West”, was one of the legends that was leaked from the outer world. By all rights, the battles of Little Garden were wars by proxies by the gods that weren’t supposed to be

acknowledged in the outer world, however due to some mysterious factor, the information of the outer world and Little Garden of these two got mixed and created a mixed space-time.

This Shen Gongbao was one of the singularities within the “Houshin Engi”.

Whether it was myth of the former or the latter world, this girl who called herself Shen Gongbao has never been spoken about.

Despite being a person who capitulated many and expanded the turbulent times while the Houshin War was intensifying—she was one of the many mysterious hermits whose existence was concluded in “Houshin Engi”.

“I understand it, albeit roughly. So in other worlds, you are saying that, that appearance of a girl is your true form?”

“Well, kind of. My real body is that of an adult, but since it seems that there’s an age restriction in the current Sun Authority War, I lowered my physical age.”

『The contents of your head are immature, huh.』

“Shut it, you old geezer. Rather, isn’t the Bull Monster-kun the same? He obviously looks like a kid.”

Shen Gongbao said it quite naturally while putting her hands on her waist. It was his first time hearing about there being an age limit, but with that, Asterius also understood the reason behind his own appearance.

So there was an age limit in the Sun Authority War.

In that case, the reason he, who was a “Minotaur”, having transformed into a young boy would be——.

“.....Kh. No.....!!?”

Asterius held his breath wondering what was going on.

His eyes grew wide from too much shock and chills went down his spine.

He——Asterius, wasn’t supposed to have been invited to the Sun Authority War.

He heard that this Sun Authority War involved people who had myths related to the sun. He thought whether he was the representative of the Greek

Pantheon, however there were many more suitable people for that compared to him who was the Minotaur. There was just no way for him to be selected out of them.

And yet, why had Asterius turned into a young boy?

Was the main factor for his young appearance something unrelated to the Authority War?

He who confronted a doubt he didn't have until now, looked at his own small hand and was astonished. However there was no feeling of discomfort. He guessed he was around fifteen years old, give or take, but this body of a young boy was undoubtedly his. It wasn't that his physical age was changed. This appearance of a young boy—was the original appearance of the genuine prince of Crete, "Asterius".

What would that mean?

Where was the truth behind him having vague memories?

Asterius held his head due to dizziness and bent his upper body.

"What's wrong? Motion sickness? If you feel sick, go bleaargh and sploosh and vomit on his back."

『It seems I have to teach you a lesson for once, Shen Gongbao. —Leaving that aside, what's the matter, Bull Monster? If you are going to vomit, I would appreciate it if you'd be considerate for me.』

".....It's nothing. Let's end the trivial talk here."

He took out his original weapon "Labrys" with his right hand. It was comparably smaller to Keraunos, but from the start this wasn't a weapon used for battle. Its true purpose lied elsewhere.

Asterius who raised his body with a ghastly expression, glared at the Spirit Train dashing at high speed while pointing the tip of the double-edged axe at it.

He still didn't believe that "Minotaur" needed salvation.

However, he now had a mystery he had to unravel by any means.

If the person called Saigou Homura was the one who had an answer to it, he

couldn't afford to let him escape now.

Asterius who raised the battleaxe "Labrys" befitting of the name labyrinth, twisted his hands and cut the empty space as if opening a lock.

*

"Sorry, let's halt the explanation of circumstances. This fellow is dangerous."

It was the woman with butler clothing walking inside the wagon, Scathach, who muttered that.

As she looked at the sky with a grim face, she swiftly grasped Homura's upper arm and brought him near. Homura who followed behind stopped his feet due to the unexpected surprise.

He wondered what was going on, but immediately following it, something unexpected happened.

His feet started to lightly float from the wagon of the Spirit Train. Homura felt confused due to the sense of suspension for a moment, but he quickly guessed what this feeling was from the experience he underwent a few days ago.

Holding onto the handrail, he looked out of the window.

"Are.....Are we falling!? Along with the Spirit Train!?"

"Right on spot! Don't leave my side. You'll die if you are careless!"

The inside of the Spirit Train dropped off in the sky was covered with agonizing cries. The Beastmen also grasped the furnishings inside the Spirit Train, but it would end badly at this rate. Suzuka immediately leaped several people that were around her close to the surface, however, including the non-combatants, there were quite a lot of people inside the wagon. She wouldn't make it, as expected.

The tiny spirits along with Calico Cat in boots were rolling around inside the wagon.

"Falling~!?"

"Not falling!?"

"Not falling, right!?"

“No, we are fallin’ no matter how ya think about it!!!”

Ukkyā~♪ The colony spirits rolled around in enjoyment. Considering their weight, it wouldn’t be much of a problem for these girls to fall from this height, but the Calico Cat was out of the question.

But the one in the most danger was Ayato who stood on the train deck.

She who was holding onto the protrusions of the deck understood what exactly just occurred.

(The boy riding on the Tiger Deity.....Is he the true form of the Minotaur!?)

At the same time as the boy holding the double-edged axes in his hands cut the space, her field of vision was dyed in a multicolored light. It wasn’t hard to guess that they were summoned on the gameboard of the labyrinth.

Along with that, Ayato realized that their reasoning was correct.

Next, Ayato, while falling, looked at the labyrinth under her eyes.

The giant labyrinth created on the floating island was undoubtedly that of Minotaur’s. They were indeed summoned on the enemy territory, but for Ayato and others who have partly obtained the solution, this wasn’t a bad condition. With this, the enemy also couldn’t escape. After this, if they could turn the tables on Minotaur, they would be able to clear the Game.

Ayato took out her beloved sword from the Gift Card that was passed on to her. As she did so, a smile naturally spilled out on her face.

It was a sword that, in the past, had challenged countless war gods and deities, overcome the death struggles and even crossed blades with the Zoroastrian Demon Lord. Enemy territory it may be, but she was allowed to embrace a slight nostalgia.

But it really lasted no more than an instant. Ayato immediately put herself on guard.

(—Here it comes!!!)

She set up the sword forged with the wrought iron technique of the fairy race, aiming for the eyes, and intercepted two enemy silhouettes heading straight at her direction.

Facing her, Shen Gongbao, White Tiger and Asterius dashed in the air and approached. Shen Gongbao in particular, had a debt of beheading from last time to repay. As if plunging forth, she took the initiative to attack.

“Hello~ Hello~, Beheader Knight! Thanks for that fascinating arrow! Here’s a return gift from me! Get blown to bits, you bastard!!!”

Shen Gongbao manipulated the seven Paopei that gathered the water before—the Houju called “Kaitenju”, and surrounded Ayato. These Paopei were the weapon type Gifts that could only be produced with the Sendou of China. These seven balls were weapons that accumulated the fluid and traveled in the sky.

They were all-purpose Paopei, having defense, offense and speed at their disposal. Although they didn’t have a specialized field, they were highly strategic. There was nothing more troublesome than gathering and manipulating several of these kinds of weapons.

Shen Gongbao also had a good understanding of the nature of her own weapon.

“Kaitenju” drew arcs from every direction all around and enclosed the target, and all seven at the same time rushed on to attack.

However, Ayato didn’t falter. If she was surrounded, all she had to do was to force her way through.

From the deck of the falling Spirit Train, she faced down and dashed. She sliced off the two “Kaitenju” coming from the front on the spot, but it wasn’t enough to destroy them. However the front was now empty.

Turning around, Ayato charged at the five “Kaitenju” pursuing her. She intended to attack Shen Gongbao herself, but it was reckless no matter how you looked at it.

Although it was for intercepting, she was physically short of hands like this.

“Hah! So arrogant, Beheader Knight!”

Five “Kaitenju” approached Ayato. The Paopei operating the water were clad in such dense winds that it could be visualized, and they raised a powerful roar

comparable to the ship's guns.

However Ayato's eyes contained no fear.

She slightly twisted the hilt of her beloved sword. Then the blade of the sword got split and its trajectory drew an arc.

By swinging it once, it drew an arc like a crescent moon, by swinging it twice, it coiled like a serpent. The special move feared as the Serpens Scorpius Sword Flash by those who have confronted her before, was now throwing a challenge to the mysteries of Sendou.

“Fuuh——!”

She synchronized her breathing. Straining her eyes in order to read the fluid's trajectory. Perhaps even the slightest lapse of focus would call for death. The serpent path that the linked sword drew accurately seized the “Kaitenju”.

—Indeed, it was certainly fast, sharp and precise.

It could be seen that the arrow from before wasn't just luck. However, this sword technique did not have enough sword force to knock down the “Kaitenju”. Even if the snake jumped into the center of the storm, it would only end with it getting rolled up by the whirlpool.

Shen Gongbao was confident in her victory. However that was a bit hasty.

From the start, Ayato didn't believe she could destroy the “Kaitenju”. Because she had already tried it just now. Therefore, there was just one way to survive the barrage before her eyes.

The moment the Serpens Scorpius sword's tip got swallowed by one of the “Kaitenju” that was creating a whirlwind—The five bullets changed their direction and rebounded back to allies.

“What!?”

『**What the!?**』

Shen Gongbao and White Tiger following behind her raised their voices in wonder. Both of them comprehended the special attack that occurred before their eyes, but exactly because of that, they couldn't help but be speechless. Until the part where the tip of the linked sword was swallowed up by one of the

whirling “Kaitenju”, it went just as Shen Gongbao predicted it. However, as Ayato violently redrew the swallowed linked sword, the air current was disturbed and the trajectory of one of the “Kaitenju” changed.

The “Kaitenju” that changed direction after the air current was disturbed, had begun to collide into each other one after another.

With this, there was nothing obstructing the space between Ayato and Shen Gongbao. Ayato tried to close the distance in one go, but the White Tiger and Asterius closed in on her and didn’t allow her to do so.

The double-edged axe was swung down from White Tiger’s back. Ayato again took out the Battle Spear from her card and proceeded to intercept it with one hand. Naturally she would lose in terms of power, but from the start her aim wasn’t a head-on collision.

It was a downswing intended to crush Ayato, but sliding the handle of a slightly slanted spear, the double-edged axe cut empty air. The double-edged axe dropped with the inertia as it gave off sparks, however this wasn’t coincidence either. Estimating the timing where the owner’s control was out of order, Ayato slanted her spear.

“Kh.....You, are you different from the person the other day?”

Asterius and White Tiger took distance by jumping back. Although it was a shameful experience for them, the instant judgment that being near would be disadvantageous was correct. The martial arts she wielded deviated from any standard style.

However Ayato wasn’t so lax in pursuit as to overlook that.

If they are thrown off for a moment, thoroughly drive them into a corner.

She who had that driven into her by her master, wasn’t so easy as to keep apart once she came to bite. Putting away her sword and spear, she took out the Battle Bow and started the rapid-fire without even taking a distance.

The three arrows she fired in one go grazed Asterius’ right shoulder, left foot and cheek. From that skillfulness, the three who opposed her have once again realized that their enemy possessed the ability of divine level.

“——Strong.....!”

Asterius raised an anguished voice. Compared to the time she fought with the Bull Monster, she was like a different person in terms of combat ability. Perhaps it was due to the weapon’s ability——nay, it would be proper to say that her nature itself had changed.

Spear for short distance, linked sword for medium distance, bow for long distance.

Cleverly leading the enemy by the nose from all range, and even overturning the number disadvantage, it was a martial arts with incredible skill. With Asterius’ skill, confronting this Queen’s Knight would be difficult. She had the worst compatibility with his double-edged axe.

However, no matter how powerful the Queen’s Knight was, there were things even she was helpless against. The fall of this Spirit Train was certainly one of them. If the divine protection of the Ley Lines that remained until now disappeared completely, the fall would be accelerated.

Ayato confirmed the surroundings in fluster.

(This is bad.....At this rate we will crash with the labyrinth.....!!!)

Ayato stabbed the spear in the deck—but at that moment, Suzuka suddenly appeared before her.

“Aya-chan, grab on!”

“Suzuka!? W-Why are you on the deck!?”

“Leave the talk for later! I have to stop the train’s fall now!”

“S-Stop it, you say!? The fall!? You will!?”

How!? Ayato’s expression returned back to that of a young girl. She set up the linked sword in confusion. She probably intended to bind Suzuka with the linked-sword. But it wouldn’t matter much. While understanding that it would end badly at this rate, there were no other ways.

But unexpectedly, Suzuka looked composed.

After glancing back at the flustered Ayato, Suzuka looked straight at Shen

Gongbao. She who extended her hand towards Shen Gongbao, released the hand she used to grab on——

“If it’s the means to float——that girl has it!”

In a moment, Suzuka parted from the Spirit Train and floated from the deck. However, her free fall lasted only for a moment.

Having her whole body clad in wind, Suzuka started to fly above the deck.

“Eh.....H-Huh!?”

Guessing that she was holding on to one of the “Kaitenju”, Shen Gongbao started counting them in surprise. She noticed that there were only six “Kaitenju” but this time, even that sixth vanished and appeared above Suzuka’s hand.

She raised a disordered voice.

“W-What’s going on!? Why are my “Kaitenju” being stolen!?”

『**Damn it.....! Is that girl the user of teleportation!**』

White Tiger remembered the exchange from before and clicked his tongue.

At the same time, he understood the nature of Suzuka’s Gift.

One of them was the Gift of “Asport” —— “Ability to transfer objects to a distant place”.

That is why the ballista arrowheads were transferred in the state of being fired. It wouldn’t have ended up like that if she transferred the stopped arrowheads. This was also a powerful Gift, but she had one more Gift of opposite vector.

That was, “Ability to transfer the distant objects near oneself”——A gift commonly referred to as “Apport”. This Gift was one of the worst towards those who used weapons and the like.

Because they would be unconditionally robbed off their arms.

But judging by the state of the current Shen Gongbao, it seemed that there was chance of even losing the ownership. Given the situation, the Sendou Paopei couldn't be carelessly used.

『What in the world.....It wouldn't be funny if the "Proto Keraunos" gets stolen! We are taking distance!』

"W-Wait a minute! What happens to my "Kaitenju"!?—Huuuuh!? Even the third one got stolen while saying that!"

Fuaaah!!! The resenting Shen Gongbao was overwhelmed by anger and tried to take out the other Paopei. But it goes without saying that it would have the opposite effect. White Tiger grabbed her collar by his mouth and disappeared towards the shadow of the labyrinth.

Suzuka on the other hand acquired three "Kaitenju", but this Gift was too difficult to use with improvisation. Although she slipped under the Spirit Train and supported the fall with "Kaitenju", she still couldn't prevent it completely. At this rate, Suzuka would be crushed under the Spirit Train.

Ayato raised her voice from the deck.

"Suzuka, Staying under the train is bad! Can't you control the "Kaitenju" remotely!?"

"Operating them becomes difficult the moment they part from my body..... more than this is probably impossible.....!!!"

The "Kaitenju" scattered the storm in the surroundings. It was a proof that their output had fallen. That way, the things that they were able to float couldn't be floated. Ayato considered to just cut open the Spirit Train, but its armor was hard and destroying it was impossible even for her.

As matters stood, there was no other choice but to teleport just before it hit the ground. Although it was slowed down quite a bit with Suzuka's power, there was probably quite a big shock within the wagon. However, there was no other way.

However, at that moment, a woman's voice resounded from the window of the train.

“Hey, the girl over there! Nice fight! Leave the rest to me!”

It was at that moment the giant shadows engulfed the falling Spirit Train.

“Eh? —Waah! What’s this!?”

The shadow was big enough to completely engulf the gigantic Spirit Train “Sun Thousand”. The shadows stopped its frame and slowly let it on the ground—but even so, it was too gigantic. There was no helping that the labyrinth that stretched vastly would be destroyed.

The labyrinth and the equipment of the Spirit Train began to collapse.

Seeing that the wagons were intact, it seemed that they were of considerable toughness.

Ayato leaped away from the deck and immediately realized who was the one who saved the train.

(This is Sensei’s “Dún Scáith”^[5], isn’t it!? So it could also be used this way!?)

Scathach who called herself a Lord Butler—as a matter of fact, was a genuine Divine Spirit.

In addition to not being a famous Divine Spirit in any way, her roots were also vague because she was born from the concept of Ancestral Spirit worship, and moreover, she was the Goddess of a special nature even among the special cases who had myths about them in both Nordic and Celtic Pantheons.

The “Dún Scáith” she has, who was the Divine Spirit who ruled over the Sun’s shadows and death, operated, was the Gift that cut off the shadows of the “Queen Halloween’s” castle. This was a proof that she governed the Celtic world at night when Queen slept, and also pointed at the fact that only in this land of shadows, she was equal to Her—but currently, the sun still hung in the sky.

This way, she wasn’t able to exercise the true power of “Dún Scáith”.

(At this time, Sensei is also not in her best condition. That being the case, it seems it’s up to me to do my best.)

Ayato braced herself. However, not being in the best condition was also the same for her.

It was also the case just now. If it was her former self, along with “Kaitenju”, she could have fatally wounded all three enemies. grieving about becoming quite out of shape was also understandable.

It couldn't be helped, the outside world was too peaceful. She had heard of it, but aside from specific areas of dispute, there were no dangers to her life as long as no serious problems arose.

Bull Monster, Sendou, Celestial Beast. These level of enemies were just right to get back into shape.

Ayato once again set up her sword.

She heard the voices of Suzuka and others just at that moment.

Suzuka who came out of the Spirit Train while brushing away the rubbles and dust of the labyrinth, stood up while shaking her hair like a cat with Saigou Homura and Scathach following behind her back.

“I-I thought it wouldn't work out this time.....! Although I came close to dying thrice after coming to Little Garden, wouldn't that give me a claim for a work-injury? What do you think, Brother!?”

“Well Sister, it naturally wouldn't, you know?”

“Oh, wouldn't queen pay something of that level to you, I wonder? Despite how she looks, Queen is quite generous with money, you know?”

“..... Suzuka, Senpai, Sensei. Please read the mood.”

Although Ayato overcame the predicament, hearing the idiotic voices of her comrades, she hung her right shoulder down tiredly.

However it was a bit too early to be relieved.

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—Inside the labyrinth slightly away from there.

Shen Gongbao and co who were hiding inside the shade of the labyrinth, distanced themselves from the Spirit Train and raised displeased voices.

“.....No good. The “Kaitenju” were completely stolen. I can't operate them from here.”

『Is that so. As if the Queen's Knight alone was not a nuisance, someone with transfer ability on top of it is truly troublesome』

“That's right. If we Hermits fight without Paopei, we aren't that strong. Rather, wasn't that Queen's Knight amazing! Repelling the Paopei with martial arts, she's the first one since Huang Feihu^[6], right, White Tiger!? That linked sword is just a normal iron sword, right!?”

『Yes. It was a weapon with strange form, but there were so signs of any special Gift residing in it. I can't call it anything but magnificent—but it's troublesome. That knight has the worst compatibility with me.』

White Tiger gnashed his teeth and said unpleasantly.

Shen Gongbao also waved her hands around as if she had given up all hope.

“Same with me. I could somehow handle fighting where my field of vision was open, but I can't carelessly use Paopei at a place like this with too many hiding places to count. I can see them being stolen with teleporting the moment I use them. It would be different if we are talking about slaughtering them all. —White Tiger, is that teleporter girl and shadow user woman also Queen's Knights?”

『I don't know about the teleporter girl, but the shadow user woman is probably a Queen's Knight. If the shadows from before was “Dún Scáith”, then she's undoubtedly Scathach.』

“.....Oh? The rumored Divine Spirit who possessed both the Celtic and the Nordic legends? If that was the deed of the Celtic Magic, we better be careful about Runic Magic as well, right?”

『I wonder. The compatibility with those two Magics is bad at lethal degree. In the first place, that Goddess should have existed from BC. She should have no connection with Runic Magic.』

White Tiger calmly analyzed the enemy's Spirit Rank.

Scathach was a member of Celtic Pantheon at present, but properly speaking, the Nordic Runic Magic was a magic of completely different cultural sphere from Ancient Celtic Magic—No, in the first place, the magic system called Runic Magic didn't exist at the time when Scathach transferred to the Celtic

Pantheon.

At any rate, she was the Goddess who had established her Spirit Rank in BC.

She shouldn't be able to use the Runic Magic that came into existence after AD.

In past he had heard that the Runestones of Runic Magic made by the likeminded Divine Spirits were divided at one point, but because there still came claims from every side about there being a possibility that the magic system would be destroyed as a result, all the Runestone Runes were returned to Norse.

Because there was too much difference in the cultural sphere, for the Ancient Celtic Pantheon where the worth of letters was light, the Runic Magic didn't gain much significance. The reason Scathach was forced to use a large-scale Gift like "Dún Scaith" might be because the ban on Magic was still in effect even now.

『Skilled Queen's Knight, teleport ability user, and on top of it, the Ruler of Shadows who's Queen's close aide, huh? We are at disadvantage with just us alone. If the other "Avatära" member's appear, we should reinforce——』

Then suddenly, White Tiger noticed that his back felt light.

『——Hey, Shen Gongbao. Where did that Bull Monster go?』

"Hm? He jumped down earlier when you grabbed me with your mouth, I believe so?"

Shen Gongbao announced quite indifferently.

White Tiger looked absentmindedly with his mouth partly open.

『A.....Are you an idiot! Say that beforehand!! We have a duty of securing him!』

"Eh, Is that how it is!? I wasn't told anything about it, you know!!?"

『There are only fellows who can't do their job right! Aah, let's quickly search for——』

"There's no need for that."

Before the panicking two a black wind fluttered.

And at the same time appeared a girl with black spotted clothes. The Black Plague, Pest who was the follower as well as the right hand of Jin Russel, handed over a letter to them.

“You two did well. It seems you were able to guide him well. You can return now.”

『.....**What?**』

“No, wait a minute, Pest! What about my “Kaitenju”!?”

“How should I know. If it’s about Paopei, didn’t you snatch a lot of them from Taishang Laojun^[7] and Yuanshi Tianzun^[8]?”

“That’s that and this is this! The attachment towards the weapons I made myself is different!”

Ugaa! Yelled Shen Gongbao. Looking at her noisy self with bothered line of sight, Pest glared at her while revealing her disregard for her words.

“Enough already. If you keep staying in the labyrinth, you’ll get rolled up in it.”

『**Rolled up? In what?**』

White Tiger asked while suppressing his displeasure. If Asterius unleashed the “Proto Keraunos” it would indeed become a violent battle, but her words seemed to contain more than just that.

Pest probably also understood what White Tiger wanted to say.

While cladding herself in sinister whirlwinds of black death, she looked up at the heavens and said amusedly.

“Isn’t that obvious? In the battle of the cannibal monster that indiscriminately eats the labyrinth invaders.....the battle of Minotaur.”

*

——Going a bit back in time.

Sakamaki Izayoi who was confronting the enemy calling themselves “Avatära” in the center of the labyrinth was also gazing at the falling Spirit Train and clicked his tongue.

(Is that.....“Sun Thousand”!? Did Porol get the approval for departure!?)

Izayoi quickly grasped the situation. Most likely, he used the Spirit Train to escape from the “Bull of Heaven”. But during that, the whole Spirit Train must have been summoned into the Minotaur’s labyrinth. It was a brilliant move, but it wasn’t compatible with the enemy’s hand this time.

If no one stopped it, it would crash into the labyrinth. The moment Izayoi tried to dash towards the Spirit Train, two shadows jumped from the throne.

“You think I’ll let you go!? You go and deal with Indra, Arjuna!”

“Understood.”

Bull Demon King leaped at Izayoi.

The boy with Divine Bow in his hands gave a short acknowledgement and headed towards Mikado Tokuteru.

The blue haired youth clad in lightning aimed his Divine Bow at Indra. Although Izayoi narrowly stopped the Bull Demon King’s club, after hearing the blue haired youth’s name, his face was dyed in amazement.

Izayoi who seized the club as if doing a lock, asked to him.

“Arjuna.....? You, did you just call that brat Arjuna!!?”

“Hah! You are focusing too much on everything around you, Sakamaki Izayoi! Are you really in a place to be worried about others!?”

Bull Demon King skillfully rotated the club which was stopped and thrust at Izayoi’s abdomen with its handle. But Izayoi immediately stopped it with the back of his right hand and pushed it back. It was good strategy to shorten the distance with long-handled weapons.

He couldn’t strike him with the tip or even the handle of the club after he got so close.

You are unexpectedly skilled, muttered the Bull Demon King and tried to take distance.

However Izayoi wasn’t so lenient as to let go of a retreating opponent. When he came down, the Bull Demon King upper body got slightly bent. In that state, his hands and body wouldn’t muster much strength.

Izayoi who kicked the club away pursued the now empty-handed Bull Demon King.

The Bull Demon King blinked his eyes in complete admiration.

“—I see. A fistfight isn’t bad once in a while!”

He did a backward somersault without even straightening his bent body, and this time the kick landed on Izayoi’s torso who came leaping at him. Being hit in the solar plexus, Izayoi coughed.

Izayoi became dizzy from the shock that almost deprived him of his consciousness.

Among the attacks he received throughout these three years, this blow was one of the strongest. Depending on the circumstances, it wouldn’t be strange even if he was knocked down by it. Biting his lips, Izayoi barely maintained his consciousness.

Being barehanded, this time the Bull Demon King shortened the distance from his side in order to pursue him.

However Izayoi wasn’t someone who would allow him to chase so easily. Judging that confronting him with his broken posture would be difficult—He kicked the ground below his feet with all his strength.

“Don’t get too cocky!!!”

The raised ground swooped down on Bull Demon King simultaneously. It would be one thing if it was some average Youkai, but there was no way for the Bull Demon King who was the continent’s leading great monster to be faltered from a flashiness of this degree.

Although the earth wave that was capable of partially destroying an average fortress proceeded to demolish the labyrinth walls, it was not enough for stopping the Bull Demon King’s charge. He had enough toughness to run through the explosion.

As he closed in on Izayoi, he sent a palm strike towards his chin.

But Izayoi predicted this. He avoided it with minimal movements by slightly moving his head and caught Bull Demon King’s outstretched right hand under

his arm in a hold.

Twisting his arm with movements knowledgeable about the movable limits of joints, he threw Bull Demon King to the ground.

“Guh.....!”

“Ha! Looks like my hunch was right, Bull Demon King! You learned under the same master as Saurian Demon King, didn’t you?”

Starting by making the enemy lose balance, hitting their stomach, and dealing the finishing blow after their movements had been sealed. Izayoi had memory of these series of attacks.

Bull Demon King who saw the how good Izayoi’s defensive move was also smiled while being pinned down.

“Hohou. I thought your intuition was sharp, could it be that you have been studying under Kouryuu?”

“No way. At best, he was only a reference for my self-studying. Because that guy was the strongest when it came to barehanded fights.....!”

Izayoi twisted his joints with creaking sounds. He didn’t make it in time for the Spirit Train’s fall, but the sound of it colliding with earth was quite soft. He guessed Queen or her close aide did something about it.

Even though the Bull Demon King was pinned down, he was laughing in complete enjoyment.

“I believe imitating him also counts as studying under him.....But I get it. So that drifting withered log got fired up as well?”

“Yeah. He’s acting as a “Floor Master” of the East now. He would certainly be surprised as well. He wouldn’t think that his missing brother would be attached to the sub-branch of the “Demon Lord Alliance” that is hostile against him.”

Izayoi looked at Bull Demon King as if condemning him.

“Demon Lord Alliance”——It was an alliance organization that was created by the Demon Lords who have rampaged in various myths and history. Izayoi, ever since being summoned, had confronted that “Demon Lord Alliance” which devoted itself to wreaking havoc in Little Garden, countless times already.

The “Avatära” that the girl calling herself the World King spoke of, was supposedly an organization made by the Demon Lord of the Indian Pantheon who was once part of the “Demon Lord Alliance”.

“He’s been lying quiet for the past three years, but he also started moving with the Sun Authority War as a goal. I also have a few things to ask you. Let’s have a nice and long talk……..!”

Izayoi twisted Bull Demon King’s arm in other direction. He probably wanted to break his arm and take the freedom of his limbs first. However, without seeming to mind it too much, Bull Demon King merely suppressed his laugh.

“Hoho, I see. It seems you guys are misunderstanding that “Avatära” is a branch of the “Demon Lord Alliance”…….But that’s already in the past.”

“What?”

“World King said it right? That “Avatära” in itself is a group of Gods. Those assembled there aren’t just Demon Lords anymore……..!”

Despite his joints bent to their limits, The Bull Demon King put strength in his knees and stood up as if nothing while his hand was still being seized by Izayoi. As expected, even Izayoi was surprised at that.

Despite putting in effort to break his arm since a while ago, there were no signs at all of it breaking.

(This guy……! His arm strength is on another level compared to me or Kouryuu……..!)

Even when Izayoi put all his strength to it, the Bull Demon King’s arm didn’t budge. He might have been bestowed a special kind of Gift, but even so, it was an unbelievable superhuman strength.

“But it’s your request after all. I don’t mind answering your questions……..but is it fine? like this.”

“——!!!”

Bull Demon King’s upper arm creaked.

Perceiving the danger Izayoi let go of his hand, but he was slightly late.

While grasping Izayoi whose arm joints were strained to the extreme and standing up, the Bull Demon King casually displayed his ability. The herculean strength that even Izayoi couldn't ignore raised an ear-shattering roar within the labyrinth. It couldn't be compared with the blast from Izayoi raising the ground.

The fist that was swung in a straight line, in less than a second, formed cracks spanning for several kilometers and pulverized the labyrinth walls. Izayoi who was blasted away by the shockwave was smacked into the wall and pierced through several of them.

(Ouchh.....This bastard, what absurd strength.....!!!)

Izayoi held his head in the debris. In terms of just physical strength, he was among the top two out of all the enemies he fought until now. In terms of martial arts, Kouryuu was better, but if the difference in physical strength was to this extent, something like the difference in martial arts was a trivial matter.

However, since the enemy was a Demon Lord, there should exist a secret that would become his trump card.

And that, known as the "Host Master", was the strongest authority within the Little Garden only usable by the high-ranking war gods and deities. If he used it now, the situation would be too unfavorable.

(Bastard. Here I'm still preparing for the Authority War! If it's like this, I should have finished the preparations.....!!!)

With the current cards up his sleeve, the chances of victory were slim, that, or the surroundings would be rolled up in it.

Izayoi glared at Bull Demon King who was walking with composure. Just as he said, he wasn't an enemy he could afford to fight while worried about others. He directed all his senses at Bull Demon King and concentrated on the battle.

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On the other side, Mikado Tokuteru was also forced into a harsh fight against the blue-haired youth called Arjuna.

The lightning arrows fired one after another from the bow presumed to be a

Divine Weapon looked just like a bombardment. Tokuteru changed his Vajra into two-pronged spear and accepted the challenge, but although not much, the firepower was different.

Tokuteru who was running about while panting yelled out of anger.

“Hey, w-wait a minute, Arjuna! Explain what’s going on! Why are you involved with the Sun Authority War!? Isn’t it unrelated to you!”

“There’s nothing to talk about. There’s just one thing here that is certain. Right now, we are mutual enemies!How about you stop running around already and get serious, oh father of mine!!!”

He fired a blue lightning arrow along with him losing patience. Tokuteru barely dodged it, but the impacted ground raised a roar and rolled up the earth. He got caught in the blast and was blown off. He somehow stood up despite rolling on the ground, and glared at his child Arjuna.

On Arjuna’s face who exchanged glances with him, there were indeed traces resembling Tokuteru.

His blue hair that reminded of lightning was a symbol of Divinity inherited from his father.

In a confused state, Tokuteru directed the tip of Vajra at him and asked again.

“.....Why, Arjuna. There are no small number of heroes who strayed from the right path after being invited to Little Garden, however those are only people who have experienced sorrow in their lives. So why did you, who should be sleeping peacefully at the sacred mountain after guiding the country to peace, sided with “Avatära” and appear in the Sun Authority War?”

Tokuteru asked in an unusually low voice. In that tone of his was felt the conviction that only this son of his would not stray from the righteous path.

But that was only natural. Indra was the oldest cornerstone of Indian Pantheon, as well as the strongest and wisest Divine Spirit, but he held an unfortunate history of being forced to reduce his Spirit Rank for various propaganda of the later world and the subsequent Divine Spirits. But even he had one cloudless thing that he took pride in.

Great hero Arjuna—the man from the Demigod race referred to as the strongest class of warriors in Ancient India where hierarchy resided. The reason he appeared with a youthful form was probably to participate in Sun Authority War.

However he didn't understand the reason. True, the Sun Authorities had various Gifts.

If several of the twenty four Sun Authorities that held enough power by themselves to even interfere with the human history were to be gathered, it would be possible to even modify the Akashic Records.

But in his son Arjuna's life, something like that should have been unnecessary. He who was a great hero with an established reputation, was supposed to live his life while bearing that glory.

That gaze of his was stopped by the anguished expression of the blue haired youth Arjuna.

His anguished expression gradually changed into a self-deprecating smile.

".....Oh Father. War God Indra. So even you cannot understand the true suffering of mine."

"What did you say?"

"Indeed I was given glory. I was blessed with family, friends, have pacified the war and made many military achievements.The strongest Kshatriya. To be displeased about such a life as mine where I even obtained such a title would just be presumptuous blasphemy."

Then why—why did Arjuna return the answer loaded with such sagacious fury towards the gaze of Tokuteru who asked him so.

"Let me return the question. Do you really have no idea about me appearing in the Sun Authority War? Reason that would make me want to participate in battle even if I have to drop all the glory I have earned to ground, doesn't one come to your mind?"

Arjuna's anger grew by every word he spoke. However Tokuteru only knit his brows.

.....No, in truth, it wasn't as if he really had no clue.

Actually, only one thing came to his mind.

But, by no means did he consider it—that for such reason, this great hero that boasted of great fame in the world would cooperate with Demon Lords.

“.....Ridiculous. I don't know what kind of ideas have they put in your head, but there should be no valid reason for you to cooperate with the current “Avatära”.”

“What a strange thing for you to say. “Avatära”, by nature, is the group of sun Kings gathered together in order to save the human history from their last days. The reason my friend is involved in it is also because of that. It is but natural for me, the one called the strongest Kshatriya, to be lending a hand, is it not?”

“That's how it originally should be, but the current “Avatära” isn't functioning normally! Even you can feel that, right!? Or do you really plan to let “Avatära” fall into the path of evil!?”

Tokuteru raised his voice towards Arjuna who had no plans to reveal his true intentions.

Then, Arjuna slightly narrowed his eyes out of surprise.

“.....I'm surprised. It appears that even with your standing, you haven't been told about the relationship between the Third Perpetual Motion and the Sun Authorities. That's exactly why “Avatära” must take hold of and control them.”

Third Perpetual Motion—From that noun, Tokuteru was once again left speechless.

Arjuna who was the great hero of Ancient Indian Mythology wasn't supposed to be too knowledgeable about the Perpetual Motion. In that case, it was “Avatära” that possessed this information. That, in other words, also means that there's a possibility that the organization called “Avatära” had started interfering with the modern era.

(Could it be that there's someone who went to the outer world without us “Twelve Guardian Devas” realizing it!?)

Normally such a thing should not be.

To them who were called the Heavenly Army, every information regarding the intervention from Little Garden with the outer world should be reported to them. Would that mean that someone who did activities in the outer world behind their backs existed?

Although Tokuteru intimidated Arjuna, he merely closed his eyes and didn't answer.

Perceiving that he didn't earn his father god's understanding, Arjuna's anger changed into sadness as he fixed his arrow.

"Questioning ends here. From this point on, I wouldn't think of you as my father. If you desire to hear about my true feelings, my lamentation, and the truth of "Avatāra"—then come at me seriously, War God Indra!!!"

Lightning dwelled within the Divine Bow. The Divine Bow he held, was the genuine Divine Weapon that, if used seriously, could even mow down hundreds of thousands of enemies. Loading all that flow of power into a single arrow, he faced his real father and set it up.

Until this point, Mikado Tokuteru was relatively composed, however—

However in an instant, the lightning started roaring within the labyrinth.

He brushed up his hair, and glared at Arjuna with trembling temples.

"Come at you seriously.....you say.....!?"

Towards his son's disrespect, he finally got enraged.

It might be called anachronism, but in the age and civilization where these two have lived, speaking to one's own father in such a way wasn't allowed. All the more if he was a Divine Spirit.

Divine Lightning began to travel in his blue hair and his face changed into one full of fury.

Be it an average warrior, they would cower with fright with just that glare of his alone.

Mikado Tokuteru who emitted enough heat to even melt the ground, roared towards his own son in anger.

“Ha! It wasn’t so complicated to need questions and answers. The logical action was to give a good beating and lecture my foolish son who went astray from the right path!!! I won’t care even if you cry, you stupid son!!!”

Lightning strikes rained incessantly from the sky. It was clear that just by him exposing his anger, the weather started to worsen. Arjuna who guessed it would be a hard fight immediately released the arrow of his Divine Bow.

Tokuteru set up the Vajra, invited the thunder in it and met it.

The fight between the parent and child who crossed a thousands of years, had started while unfolding a violent explosion.

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Violent rumbles in the ground and clouds of dust started to drift in the labyrinth. It was a proof that intense battles were occurring in every part of the labyrinth. The labyrinth walls that divided the paths crumbled one after another and it was just a matter of time until it would turn into an empty land.

The place Saigou Homura and others stood was also turned into one of such spacious lands.

The Spirit Train destroyed the labyrinth walls with its frame.

Ayato was keeping company to Shen Gongbao and White Tiger, but she also didn’t have any sort of injury. There would be no problem in the battlefield as it was. Rather, you could think that Suzuka raised her battle potential by stealing the enemy’s Paopei. Even if participating in the battle was out of question, it would make the battles easier if she had measures to defend herself. The usurping transfer would also become a good constraint. It would be okay to think that with this, those two had been turned mostly powerless.

“_____”

Yes—Until the main enemy said those words, Suzuka had believed so.

“Don’t move, teleporter!”

Youth appearing from the other side of the debris ordered Suzuka. Ayato immediately reacted to it, but she also became unable to move carelessly. Looking at the weapon he held in his right hand, there was no helping that it

became so.

Grasped in the Bull Monster Asterius' hand wasn't the "Labrys" from before. That was something made for inviting targets into the labyrinth, a ritual tool, and not something used for battle.

"Proto Keraunos"—The battleaxe that held the most destructive ability among the Twelve Constellations.

A giant double-edged axe shining with lightning dwelling in it, even now, emitted an intimidating air as if slaughtering Ayato and others. If used even once, it would destroy the enemy along with the labyrinth.

While brushing her sweat Ayato gazed at the Divine Weapon in Asterius' hand.

(Divine Weapon.....! Damnit, to think that he even had something like that.....!)

The momentary relief she was able to collect from Homura and co's safety, had formed cracks in it.

If it was the old Ayato, this would also be a shameful sight. She looked for a moment to use her linked sword, but just by swinging his weapon, the enemy would put the Divine Weapon into motion.

Even Ayato wouldn't be able to make it.

And it was the same for Suzuka. She would be able to snatch the weapon just by raising her right hand. She was looking at the opportunity to deprive him of the battleaxe while in cold sweat, but Scathach stopped her with her right arm and shook her head.

"W-Why.....!?"

"Give up on it. It won't work unless it's a surprise attack. Everyone will get involved and die."

They were frank and direct words of restraint. They were the words of someone she didn't even know, but they held truth in them. There was also part that she was the oldest out of everyone present here, but it wasn't just that.

Suzuka widened her eyes and was surprised, but she swallowed her words and withdrew.

While setting up the Divine Weapon, Asterius confirmed the faces of everyone one by one.

He confirmed the faces of Ayato, Suzuka, Scathach—and finally looked at the face of Homura.

(.....Is it him?)

Judging from his stature, he was around fifteen years old. It was a youth with the same age as the current him. Asterius finally found his target, but he was bewildered by his frail Spirit Rank.

If you ask why—it was because it was too anticlimactic. He judged that neither of his three qualities exceeded the average just by looking at his standing figure. Like these, the Beastmen or even Crete residents would easily cut off his head.

Just what part of him would become his salvation. No, before that, could he answer the mystery that he carried. He became unsure of even that.

Asterius faced him with an irritated gaze. While a hasty thought of quickly settling it passed his mind, he should probably ask the things he had to ask beforehand. If he didn't find those answers satisfactory, he would immediately swing down the thunder. And it would be the end of this Gift Game.

He who directed his gaze at Saigou Homura, asked him the first and the last question.

“The boy over there. Do you have nothing you need to say to me—to “Minotaur”?”

He gave permission to speak. However, he didn't lower his weapon. It was similar to terrorism, but had no intention to be lenient. The thunder increased its brightness and he was about to unleash the lightning bolt.

Asterius quietly waited for the answer.

However, the person in question, Saigou Homura had hardened with surprised eyes. That wasn't by no means because of Asterius' question. Not a

single word of Asterius had entered his head. Because he knew that he was the true identity of Minotaur, he stiffened his face with rigidity.

“——Is this...for real?”

He couldn't believe it. He muttered a word unrelated to Asterius' question. If it was a kind of haggling, he would have swung down the thunder without a word.

However Homura's state was clearly strange. Asterius also made a puzzled expression. Thinking back, Homura was surprised at Asterius ever since he appeared in this place.

In short, he——Saigou Homura, was surprised by the very appearance of Asterius itself, and became shocked.

That was also the doubt of Asterius himself. He thought there was a slim hope, that he might possibly know something.

Asterius poured energy into the thunder, strengthened his voice and asked again.

“What's wrong? What do you know about me!? What is this youthful appearance of mine!? Am I.....not the Bull Monster - Asterius of Crete.....!?”

The true feelings he was concealing spilled out together with impatience.

There was only one thing that identified himself as the “Legendary Minotaur”.

The sea roars of Mediterranean Sea and the cloudless sky, and also the townscape with chalk hue. Only that memory made him confident in himself.

But his memory wasn't an evidence. He wouldn't able to push his chest out with pride if there was no definite proof.

At the very least, he wanted someone to confirm it.

.....Yes, he might indeed have needed salvation. Deep down, Asterius revealed a self-deprecating smile towards his self that acted bravely. If he truly could answer him, he would even spare him from devouring.

——What would be the reply. He asked with a gaze loaded with the idea of ultimatum.

Homura also noticed that gaze, however he didn't seem to be planning to answer immediately. He continued to hold down his mouth with an unpleasant face. When he indulged himself in the sea of thoughts, he fundamentally didn't hear the people's words. Neither did he ask for opinions. He wouldn't say a word until he would find an answer he was satisfied with.

Rumbles in the ground resounded in a distance, and the labyrinth was full of lightning. When Homura finally realized that he didn't have that much time, he suddenly raised his face.

“Asterius.Calm down and listen. Probably, something startling will occur now.”

They were unexpected words. Ayato and others who heard it also exchanged looks in puzzlement. They were words, that were difficult to judge what they were suggesting. After hesitating for a bit to choose better words—he uttered the final victory condition.

“Erase the lightning”.

“Asterius. You—are not the Minotaur.”

The moment he spoke that truth...

The heartbeat of the genuine man-eating monster started to resound within the labyrinth.



- 1 Shen Gongbao. ↩
- 2 Investiture of the Gods. ↩
- 3 White Tiger was the one Shen Gongbao rode in mythology. ↩
- 4 King Zhou of Shang. ↩
- 5 Dún Scáith. ↩
- 6 Huang Feihu. ↩

7 Taishang Laojun. ↩

8 Yuanshi Tianzun. ↩

Chapter 8

At the center of the labyrinth made by chalk stones, the first one to notice the abnormality was the World King, sitting on the throne and spectating in enjoyment.

While holding her knees on the throne, “It’s nice to be young, eh~”, she happily muttered those mature words that were unthinkable from her outward appearance, however she suddenly knit her brow from the gigantic pulsation that reverberated within the labyrinth.

“.....Oya? It seems the wind’s direction has changed. Was the Game cleared I wonder?”

She pouted her lips. She was probably unsatisfied because the waiting time was long. As she stood up, the surrounding structures pulsed just like a human’s skin and sent waves.

As to what this signified, it was unknown to the World King who didn’t know the Game contents.

The one thing she understood was that the surroundings around the throne she was sitting on were undergoing an abnormal change.

“It’s regretful, but.....can’t be helped. Following my first goal, I’ll proceed to capture the “Bull of Heaven”, I guess.”

It would be fun if Eighth Avatar was here~, she muttered while turning her shoulders.

Her gown fluttered softly like feathers and she looked up at the crevice that acted as a gateway. On the other side of that crevice, the blue sky of the Mediterranean Sea was spread wide.

“Fufu. Will the winner of the labyrinth crawl out to flee from here? Or would they make a triumphant return with honor? I’m looking forward to it.”

Her long, smooth hair was pulled up, spread into a conical shape and gave rise

to an elegant wind. But as her hair closed with its rotation, the World King in young girl form disappeared with the wind.

On the other side, Izayoi and Bull Demon King also noticed the unusual phenomenon but they didn't show signs of stopping the fight. For them who strained their nerves to the limit and competed to their utmost limits, there was no room for that.

Izayoi swiped away the fist swung up by the Bull Demon King with the back of his hand to dodge it. The fist of the Bull Demon King that struck the ground created a huge cavity in the labyrinth, then turned into a crater and spread.

By all rights, one would die just by the pressure of this fist, but Izayoi's abnormality also did not fall behind.

The moment he was about to be blown away, he grasped the Bull Demon King's horns, then turned around and delivered a knee to his face. The body of the Bull Demon King who was thrown off balance got easily blown away and pierced through several layers of labyrinth walls.

"Hah!.....How did you like that, You damn Demon Lord.....!"

He wiped away his sweat while panting lightly. It was Izayoi attacking, but the attack frequency and tension on his nerves were directly linked to his exhaustion.

Both of their fists were deadly enough to destroy nature and split oceans.

Those fists that could originally destroy everything with just a single blow were clashing with each other.

While it was true that the opponent was a Demon Lord, if they were grasped by the horns and have a knee driven to their face, they should receive a serious injury——

"Oh man, you got me there! You are more refined than I thought! I never heard that you had skills for martial arts, Sakamaki Izayoi!"

The Bull Demon King sent the debris flying and stood up.

Unbelievable as it might have been, the Bull Demon King was unhurt.

In contrast to him who took a daunting pose with his hands on his waist, Izayoi was leaning on the wall with blood welling in his mouth. More than the abnormal situation around him, Izayoi couldn't hide his surprise towards the physical strength of Bull Demon King.

(He's too tough no matter how you put it.....! Just what kind of Gift is he using.....!!?)

Despite receiving his fists that were even compared to the movements of the planetary crust, it didn't seem like they had any effect on Bull Demon King's body. It's been three years since he has been coerced in such one-sided hand-to-hand battle.

Recalling the legend of the Bull Demon King who had superhuman strength and a giant build that exceeded the mountains, he must indeed have this much power, but there was one other thing that Izayoi couldn't hide his surprise at.

According to Little Garden rumors, he heard that Bull Demon King's strongest point was that he could freely use the Gift of "Handling every weapon on the world".

In other words, this man was still not serious.

Without even using his essential Gift, he managed to drive Izayoi to this point.

"Hmm. It seems you are superior in hand-to-hand combat. You are quite something."

"Hah! Look who's talking. It practically had no effect on you.....!"

Izayoi spat out blood. The damage from Bull Demon King's first attack still remained.

Bull Demon King put his hand to his jaw and fixedly stared at Izayoi. It was unknown what he found amusing, but this man was like that in everything he did. Did he have some sort of motive, or was he simply a battle maniac.

Whichever it was, it would be bad at this rate.

Izayoi fixed his breath and entered into battle stance, but Bull Demon King stopped him.

"Well, wait. It seems that the situation has changed. I have another work I

need to attend to. Besides, this change of labyrinth.....something might've happened to Homura's group. Those children still need your protection."



“.....Wha.....!?”

Izayoi was once again shocked. His current words contained clear feelings of friendliness. What’s more, similar feelings were also directed towards Homura and Suzuka, rather than just Izayoi.

Speaking of the Bull Demon King, he was certainly the famous user of high level transformation, but could it be that he had met with Izayoi and others in the past? What’s more, it would still be understandable if it was just Izayoi, but people who had relations with the other two were limited.

Who in the world was he? Izayoi continued thinking about it.

Person who was acquainted with those children from Canaria Home, and also suitable for Bull Demon King’s transformation. And also, someone who had potential to cross over to Little Garden from the outer world.

Person who fulfilled those conditions.....there was only one.

It did not take long before he found the answer.

“Y.....You, no way.....!!?”

He hesitated to say it while having obtained an almost definite answer. Be it the normal Izayoi, this conduct would be unthinkable from him. But that was only natural.

Because he heard that the person who appeared in his mind had died two years ago.

On the other hand, the Bull Demon King who seemed to be very pleased with that reaction, took out the Banana-leaf Fan^[1] from the empty space and swung it down once.

“Well, that’s how it is. There are many things to talk about, but let’s end it with this for today.....It seems an urgent matter has appeared just now. Right now——You’d better fly to Homura’s side!!!”

“Wha.....W-Wait a minute, our talk is still not over, you shitty old geezer——!!!”

Receiving the wind that blew from the ground, Izayoi’s body fluttered up in the air. As expected, since the wind blew from below even Izayoi couldn’t hold

on to the ground.

Banana-leaf Fan——It was a Paopei that contained Senjutsu that raised winds from the ground. Originally it was the Paopei of his wife, Princess Iron Fan, however he held onto it as a weapon for his fresh start.

Bull Demon King who saw off Izayoi who was being blown off to the other side of the labyrinth, lifted up his club with agility and muttered towards the direction of the Spirit Train.

“.....In truth, I also want to rush to them, but I have no face to show them yet. I leave the rest to you, Izayoi.”

*

During that time——another battle came to a conclusion at the same time.

“.....!”

Mikato Tokuteru shed large quantity of blood from his flank and fell to his knees. Looking closely, the lighting arrow was deeply pierced into his abdomen. It was obvious as to who did that. The great hero who fought with him——Arjuna who was his son, was looking down at Tokuteru who had fallen to his knees with displeased expression and gaze.

He who lowered the Divine Bow Gandiva, asked in a bewildered state.

“.....Ridiculous. You are way too weak. Is this your current power.....?”

Although his voice was filled with sadness, it didn't contain a bit of disappointment.

Arjuna had vaguely understood this conclusion.

Taishakuten——Indra, being called as the Strongest War God was a thing from the distant past. In order to preserve the human history and the various gods that appeared later on, he had distributed his power to others in varied forms.

Divine Spirits who had sudden raise in their Spirit Rank starting from the final scriptures of Indian Mythology “Rig Veda”, after being handed over the seat of the strongest from him, were able to form the Pantheon for the first time.

And it didn't stop at just gods.

Indra's son, Arjuna as well, was a hero who had received a part of that strongest power described in the scriptures.

Moreover, even if they were father and son, the power relationship between Arjuna who was given many prominent Divine Weapons of Indian Pantheon and Indra, had underwent a turn-around.

The King of Gods who originally belonged to the Omnipotent Domain—At this point, had a power no bigger than an average hero.

“Oh father of mine. Strongest War God who was once stronger than Shiva, and wiser than Brahma. You who were called equal to even Zeus.....Is this, truly your whole power? Could it be that some kind of seal was applied on you?”

“.....You say some painful words for my ears. This is truly my current all.”

Tokuteru wiped his sweat away while suppressing the bleeding. If he didn't put his all into healing now, his life would be in danger. He already spilled the amount of blood in the labyrinth that was lethal for humans.

The fact that he was still alive was probably because he was a Divine Spirit, but in the first place, it was impossible to wound a Divine Spirit with such physical methods. It should be impossible to defeat a Divine Spirit who had close relations with human history unless it was the Gift of opposing god or an ability with enough destructive power to end an era.

Arjuna's questions knew no end. But he was also a warrior with long experience.

He was not inexperienced or naive enough as to overlook a wounded enemy that bent his knees.

“Is that so. I suspected whether someone had obstructed you.....if you were serious then it can't be helped. This is also the custom of battlefield.”

—*Please, resolve yourself.*

He grieved in his heart towards the rudeness of pulling his bow against his own father god, but he also had his objectives. Once he started the battle, he couldn't afford to back down so easily.

As he set up his Divine Bow Gandiva, the thunder roared within the labyrinth once more. Concentrating the lightning that could mow down a million troops into a single arrow, the divine lightning grew so dense that it warped the space.

Tokuteru looked up at that arrow while gnashing his teeth. That attack exceeded the current Tokuteru's level by at least one digit. By all rights, he would disappear while being delighted of the growth of his son, but currently he couldn't do that.

This child of god——was being led astray by someone.

The existence who, same as “Avatāra”, existed to reforming the righteous path, was scattering the calamity in the world. No matter if he was a Divine Spirit who lost his power——as the King who supervised the good deities, he had to at least prevent that with any kind of methods.

“Damnit. As a father, this was the only means I didn't want to use. But I can't afford to say that, huh. ——Sorry about this. I'll be leaving the rest to you, my follower!”

“YES! I will help you now!”

In that moment, a blow coming from Arjuna's blind spot at astounding speeds was driven into his flank.

“Gaah!!?”

Arjuna threw up blood after suffering an assault, and got blown away while leaping many times.

The Girl who came attacking while her hair that burst into deep crimson fluttered——Kuro Usagi from “Moon Rabbits”, had kicked Arjuna flying at third cosmic velocity.

““Moon Rabbit”!!? There were survivors from the Aristocrats of Little Garden!?”

“YES! I'm honored meeting you for the first time, Arjuna-sama! Pardon my impoliteness, but Kuro-Usagi will be your opponent from this point on!”

Setting up the “Vajra Replica”, Kuro Usagi entered the battle mode.

Arjuna became wide eyed from her enormous Spirit Rank. The “Moon Rabbit”

girls being given the “Judge Master” have been bestowed one of the leading combat abilities within Little Garden. However, even if bearing that in mind, he could feel that the Spirit Rank of this Moon Rabbit was unusual. The lightning spilling from her body rivaled Gandiva, and the physical strength overflowing from her entire body far surpassed that of Arjuna’s himself.

“I see……..! So father has entrusted his Spirit Rank to this rabbit……..!”

He wasn’t sure what circumstances had lead it to that point.

However the Spirit Rank Kuro Usagi possessed was of an unusual level even among the “Moon Rabbits”.

It would be another matter if he was an adult, but that Spirit Rank was of such a scale that the current young Arjuna couldn’t even fight against it. His guess that she was entrusted Indra’s Divinity was most probably correct.

With *Usaa!* sound, Kuro Usagi raised her usamimi and pointed the Vajra at Arjuna.

“It helps that you guessed quickly. Due to slightly special circumstances, the current Kuro Usagi has transformed into a substitute of Indra-sama and Chandra-sama. If you have something to say to your father, please enquire to Kuro Usagi for it first.”

“……..No, that isn’t necessary. My doubts were cleared and the talk is finished. So there is no need for me to speak any more than this with my father.”

Arjuna withdrew his bow and laid down his weapon. He only wanted to earn his father’s understanding, and to openly participate in the Sun Authority War. However just as he had roughly expected, he couldn’t earn it. However, even without obtaining his father god’s blessing, as long as he chased his long-cherished desire as a warrior, that alone would be fine.

Arjuna had an old enemy that he, by whatever means—even if he had to bear dishonor, had to fight against once more.

“……..Is that so. Kuro Usagi is also participating in the Sun Authority War as the head judge. Fighting needlessly with Players is not what I desire.”

“Is that so. Thank you, you have my gratitude.”

“However, Arjuna-sama. In exchange for turning a blind eye on this, may I give you one advice?”



Arjuna tilted his head in doubt.

While hesitating a little awkwardly, Kuro Usagi gave her advice.

“That is.....I believe it’s better to cut ties with bad friends.”

“..... Fufu. I will bear that in mind.”

Revealing a bitter smile, Arjuna faced the crevice in the sky and jumped in it. The moment he passed through, the crevice reflected Little Garden for an instant and then it returned back into the sky of the Mediterranean Sea. At a glance that gateway seemed to be connected to the Mediterranean Sea, however in reality it was connected to the world of entrance.

Since it had a structure of returning people back to the world they came from, he had also returned to Little Garden. The exceptions were normal Players like Homura and his friends.

Kuro Usagi turned around with her skirt flaring to the sides and rushed to Tokuteru.

“T-Taishakuten-sama! Are your injuries alright!?”

“Yeah.....Sorry about this, Kuro Usagi. It is inexcusable to make the judge fight.Also, please call me Tokuteru.”

“Ah, YES! I’m glad Tokuteru-sama is safe!”

Kuro Usagi said correcting herself in hurry and stood up while shouldering Tokuteru who finished stopping his bleeding.

“This labyrinth is dangerous. Kuro Usagi will escape together with you.”

“That would help. —But, are you sure? About not helping Homura’s group.”

“Kuro Usagi is a judge after all, I can’t participate in Games. Stopping personal fights is the limit of what I can do. —Besides.”

Shaking her usamimi, she looked back at the Spirit Train. Her usamimi, who was the Game judge, possessed the Gift that let her grasp the present condition of the Game.

Swaying her bunny ears with an *usa-usa*, she laughed in apparent relief.

“I’m sure they will be fine. Homura-san.....has one quite reliable big brother

after all!”

That being said—He’s also the biggest problem child!

Leaving those words behind, Kuro Usagi and Tokuteru fled away of the labyrinth.

*

The moment Homura spoke that truth, Asterius’ horns crumbled into pieces. At the same time, Keraunos lost its power and fell off from his hand.

Attacked by pain and shock, he fell to his knees on the spot.

“Gii……Gu-gah……!?”

Even if he tried to speak, the words didn’t come out well. There were too much things he wanted to hear and had to ask. Compared to the pain from his suffering, his pain from being unable to speak was greater now.

The words Saigou Homura spoke. He couldn’t die without asking about the true meaning of them.

“—You are not the Minotaur.”

In that case—just who in the world was the him that was here.

Was the Minotaur not the man eating monster dwelling in the labyrinth? Was he not the prince of Crete? Was his memories of the sea breeze and skies of the Mediterranean Sea just fake?

Just who was the boy bearing the name of stars and lightning—Asterius……!!?

While caught up in the agony of having no answer to those questions, the mysterious boy lied down on the ground and stopped moving.

Ayato still had her sword set up in vigilance. She felt that she grew dull at this point, but her once polished intuition was giving off the alarms that “This battle was not over yet”.

Wind passed by along with silence. Thereupon, steadily the rumbles in the ground started to reverberate. There were also the after-effects of other people's battles mixed in, however these rumbles were resonating from an even deeper part of the ground.

Homura immediately grasped the situation and yelled towards Suzuka.

"Suzuka! Take that guy and the axe along and take cover inside the Spirit Train!"

"Eh, a-are we bringing this kid along!?"

"I'll explain the situation later! Hurry up, there's no time!"

Suzuka looked doubtful, however she quickly understood the reason. The gigantic shadow hung widely above them as if covering them. The three raised their faces wondering what was going on, but that reaction of theirs was a bit late.

Above their heads—The mass of chalk rocks extending from the labyrinth ground was hanging down just like an arm.

"Senpai, Suzuka! Fall back!"

Ayato who switched her Linked Sword to Battle Bow shot three arrows in one go. Although it was a rapid-fire, the arrows also had plenty of destructive power in them, however the mass of rocks didn't seem like it would stop with just having less than half of its body destroyed.

It would be the end with this if the enemy was a living being, but the enemy this time was just a mass of rocks. There was no expectation that it would stop with that. Fortunately however, the giant arm of rocks passed by their heads.

Suzuka who understood that the target of those rocks were Asterius and Keraunos quickly pulled them towards herself. He was indeed an enemy that had been hostile, however they couldn't forsake a young boy that was near their age.

Homura shouldered Asterius while Ayato carried Keraunos.

The mass of rocks immediately perceived them as enemies.

"Suzuka, hurry up!"

“I know!”

The chalk mass of rocks merged into the labyrinth and the throbbing started to reverberate.

The labyrinth then began to rumble, even absorbed the debris to the ground and begun to form gigantic protuberances. The form of pulsating rock surface looked quite like a living organism. Or perhaps, it really was a living being.

The chalk monster formed the skull, grew arms and produced horns.

Even to others aside from Homura, it was easy to understand what that was.

Ox-headed Man Eating Labyrinth

——“Minoa Labrys Labyrinth”.

Seeking the sacrifice, the ox-headed demon, clad in chalk armor howled towards Homura’s group.

『GEEEEYAAAAaaa————!!!』

A giant arm attacked them with a sideways sweep. Homura was burdened with Asterius, but he quickly threw him towards Suzuka and yelled.

“Suzuka, take that guy along and escape ahead!”

“B-But, what about you and Aya-chan!?”

“I will protect Senpai! If he is the target, it would earn us some time if you take refuge in Spirit Train! Sensei, please protect the Spirit Train with Suzuka!”

Ayato who took out the Double Spears pulled through it by instantly dividing the chalk arm into twenty four parts, but even so, the ox-headed demon immediately regenerated. Looking at that, Ayato bitterly clenched her back teeth.

It might be that this ox-headed demon, like “Bull of Heaven”, also didn’t have a core that would act as its real body.

In case the labyrinth itself was its body, it would be the same as them being inside the monster’s stomach. Taking the compatibility difference as well in mind, the current Ayato didn’t have any means to defeat this opponent.

Contrary to Ayato who felt such a sense of crisis, Scathach who had been quietly watching until now, cleared away the debris with the surrounding

shadows and asked doubtfully.

“Oh, would it be fine if I don’t fight?”

“If it’s Sensei’s “Dún Scáith”, it would be able to cover the entire Spirit Train! I leave Suzuka and others in your care!”

“Yes, that’s right. Well then, do your best, my favorite pupil. Those guys are plenty strong.”

See you, waving her hand, Scathach disappeared along with Suzuka. From the words she left behind, Homura and Ayato who remained at that place grew pale. And their bad premonition quickly came to light.

The “Labrys” patterns depicted on the wall transformed into ox heads in succession and proceeded to change their forms.

Three, four, five, the group of ox-heads rapidly increased in number.

Ayato changed her spear to her Linked Sword and asked Homura while spilling cold sweat.

“..... Let me ask one thing. Do you have any means of clearing this, Senpai?”

“I have two. That said, both of them require Asterius’ cooperation. We have to persuade him first.”

“What? I thought he wasn’t Asterius?”

“No, he just isn’t the Minotaur, but he is Asterius.”

Ayato began to ask about it, but the group of ox heads weren’t so peaceful as to wait for it. Looking at them, the number of ox heads exceeded twenty. Turning their backs on the crowd of ox heads that chased them as they increased one by one, the two faced the Spirit Train and broke into a run.

“It can’t be helped.....Let’s retreat for the time being!”

“Run to the passenger wagon, We should be able to get in from the window there!”

“Understood! Let’s hurry up to make it before it gets covered by Sensei’s “Dún Scáith”!”

The Serpens Scorpius Sword Flash cut down the ox-headed arms that were

coming from the left and the right. The Sword Flash moving like a flexible whip cut through the crowd of ox-heads in succession, however this didn't act as a fundamental solution. Moreover, it had no meaning since they regenerated the moment they were cut.

(It wouldn't take much time to get to the guest wagon by myself.....But with Senpai.....!)

They weren't that apart from the guest wagon, but it was the problem of numbers. In contrast to the attacks from this side getting completely regenerated, if Ayato or Homura took even a single hit, it would end as a fatal wound.

She already felt the presences of dozens of ox heads from behind.

It would be bad at this rate.

Resolving herself, Ayato stopped her feet.

"Senpai please go ahead! I will——"

Hold them back, she didn't finish her words.

Immediately after she prepared herself for a death battle, a furious wind started to blow. Receiving a sudden strong wind, Homura crashed on the frame of the Spirit Train, and fell to his knees on the spot.

"Ugh, crap.....!"

He quickly raised his body, but one of the ox heads didn't overlook that and rushed to attack. The wind grew even stronger, however the flying thing that the sudden gust carried with it smashed down the ox-head from the top.

"——That shitty old geezeeeeer!!!"

He who came flying along with a flashy explosion——Sakamaki Izayoi, same time as he landed, smashed his fist on the labyrinth ground with enough force to pierce through it.

Although it is was an ox-headed monster that continued to regenerate, it wouldn't be able to regenerate so easily if it was crushed into tiny fragments. Homura got hit in the head by the fragments and saw stars, but he quickly shook his head and looked at Izayoi.

“I-Iza-nii!? Why are you here!! Also, what’s with appearing with perfect timing just like last time, were you watching from the sidelines!!?”

“Like I’d do that! I have my own circumstances!”

The two siblings reflexively quarreled like old times, but they couldn’t continue in this state of affairs. While being grateful towards the unexpected reinforcements, Ayato called out to Izayoi.

“Izayo—I mean, Senpai’s Onii-san! Please run to the guest wagon that way! It’s possible to get in the Spirit Train from the window there!”

“Haah?”

Izayoi looked at Ayato with a displeased face. He probably thought the blond haired girl looked familiar. *From her age, she’s seems to be a student like Homura*—It happened as he thought so.

The moment he saw her Serpens Scorpius Linked Sword, Izayoi looked at her with an astounded face.

“Wait………That Linked Sword…”

“Ugh, leave the talk for later, hurry up and run!”

Ayato dashed towards the guest wagon of the Spirit Train at high speed.

She cried deep down, thinking “I got found out by the one person I didn’t want to notice the most………!!!”, however it was too late. The defense of “Dún Scáith” was already halfway finished.

While still confused about the situation, Izayoi held Homura on his shoulder and followed behind her.

¹ The fan of Bull Demon King’s wife, Princess Iron Fan, made from banana leaves. ↩

Chapter 9

——“Sun Thousand” Guest Wagon.

After everyone took refuge, the whole wagon was covered by Scathach’s “Dun Scaith”.

The attacks of the ox-headed crowd continued for a while, however it seemed that they had enough intelligence to understand that it was useless. After an hour, the surroundings were filled with silence.

The Spirit Train covered by “Dun Scaith” was dim, having no sunlight come from the windows. The swaying state of the candlelamp created an illusion as if stirring up their anxiety.

Inside the wagon where the high alert was temporarily dispelled, they explained the circumstances to Izayoi who joined them midway.

Izayoi who heard the talk folded his arms, his eyes containing light that showed that he somewhat understood it.

“.....I see. To think Asterius was about fifteen years old. If that story is true, the proper solution might be to think that Asterius ≠ Minotaur.”

“W-Why would that be? I don’t understand how it’s connected at all!”

Suzuka joined them in the train, but hearing Izayoi’s reasoning, she ended up being confused.

Homura raised his right hand and gave a timely help.

“According to the Greek legends, the man-eating of Minotaur was performed once every nine years, and at those times, seven boys and girls were offered up as a sacrifice. ——Do you get it? The ceremony was performed every nine years.”

Suzuka and Ayato were taken aback from Homura’s reference.

“I-I see.....! If it was repeated many times in nine year’s cycle, the age of

fifteen year old youth wouldn't add up to it!"

"Certainly. If we follow the legend, then he should be at least eighteen years old.However, if that's the case, another problem arises. In the first place, who in the world is he? Is he really Asterius?"

Holding her chin with her hand, Ayato raised a question. Asterius who lied on the bed of the guest room was unconscious and was unable to hear the conversation.

Therefore, it was Izayoi who responded to her question.

"I can think of two theories.

First, "The boy named Asterius doesn't exist and this boy is nothing but a sacrifice."

Second, "Asterius exists. However, he died as a youth by some unknown factor X."

Taking in mind the current incident, the latter should be correct. I'm sure that this brat died by a smallpox or some kind of virus."

The reasoning of Homura and others that "He turned ugly because of some kind of virus resembling a smallpox" was half correct, half wrong.

Infected by an endemic disease, he probably died without making a full recovery.

"The belief towards bulls on Crete is rooted strongly, and even the word "Minotaur" seems to mean "Bull of Minos". With the reasoning based on the "Beauty Determining Disease" from before, the negative implication grew stronger."

His name while alive was "Asterius", signifying stars and lightning.

Having died without reaching adulthood, he underwent the name change to "Minotaur".

And so, the true identity of the legendary man-eating labyrinth inhabiting monster in the unbeatable labyrinth was——

""Minotaur"——True identity of the man-eating monster.

It was the royal tomb of the Prince of Crete, Asterius.”

Huh! Suzuka and Ayato exchanged looks.

“Royal tomb.....S-So that’s it! The seven sacrifices were for the ritual for the repose of the soul!”

“The selection of the boys and girls might have been for that purpose. Seven sacrifices was perhaps referring to the selected servants who were made to follow their master into death.^[1]”

In the monarchy of BC, selecting people to follow the king into the grave was not unusual.

Or perhaps, it might have been the ritual for pacifying the endemic disease.

Homura looked at Asterius sleeping on the bed with a keen expression on his face.

“Or.....it might be that at first, this guy himself was the sacrifice.”

“Eh?”

“It seems that even the ritual of pacifying the endemic disease had a custom of offering a bull as a sacrifice. Being renamed to “Minotaur”^{Bull of Minos} might signify that the Prince who suffered from the endemic disease and didn’t have long to live had become a sacrifice.”

In other words—it would mean that the Prince of Crete, Asterius didn’t meet his end from the disease, but was instead decapitated by his father.

Homura, Suzuka and Ayato lowered their gazes, unable to endure it.

Especially Homura and Suzuka, being people of orphanage, had various thoughts in minds.

“Canaria Family Home” was the orphanage that gathered kids with special circumstances.

They were mostly kids who were born with peculiar characteristics and had feuds with their real parents. There were also kids who were unable to overcome the scars in their hearts and couldn’t face the adults even to this day. These two were the senior group of that kind of orphanage.

Both Suzuka and Homura couldn't help but worry about Asterius' circumstances.

".....So anyway. This Prince-sama himself isn't a bad person, right?"

"That's how it turns out. His horns broke and he stopped being a monster."

"Is that so! Then, we have to talk about his future later!"

Right, Homura and Suzuka nodded at each other. Ayato bent her head, not understanding what the two were thinking, however it seemed that Izayoi understood it. Perhaps it was due to the difference in circumstances.

Izayoi who sharpened his gaze stepped before the two.

"Wait a minute. You aren't seriously going to say something like taking this guy back with you, right?"

"That's what we wanted to say. Right, brother?"

"Yup, that was precisely it, my sister."

"What the heck are you saying!! Just because he lost his horns, it's not like he became completely human, and our previous talk was only a supposition! What will you do if something happened to other chibis!?"

Izayoi rebuked them with unusual seriousness. He was probably anxious about letting a monster with unknown character into his former home.

However, Homura and Suzuka wouldn't be the senior group if they faltered with this level of rebuke.

They quickly prepared a counterattack and glared back.

"But Homura will be involved in this Authority War from now on as well, right? Wouldn't it be better to actively increase the allies?"

"Right, it wouldn't be bad to do so. Him going to school might be difficult, but housework in general really requires more hands."

"Stop messing around you idiot duo. Will you two take the responsibility when something happens, huh!? This is no place to be pointlessly stubborn!!!"

He asked about how they would take responsibility with enough intimidation to tremble the interior of the train.

In the instance where Asterius hadn't lost his man-eating will as a Bull Monster—Just how would anyone take responsibility. The two erased their expressions but still gave an immediate reply.

“.....Responsibility? Something like that, isn't it given, we'll take full responsibility.”

“It's not a pointless stubbornness. It's our stubbornness as a human being.”

The two proclaimed without shaking. Ayato watched over them full of anxiety, but she knew full well about Homura's and Suzuka's nature of not abandoning misfortunate children.

During these five years—those two have lived while taking full responsibility of everything that occurred in the orphanage. It was the same when they lost the investors and it became impossible to go on due to financial difficulties.

If the orphanage stopped operating, children who would lose their place to go to would definitely appear. Even at such times, Homura and Suzuka desperately ran about, and in the end succeeded to earn the support of “Everything Company” that Kudou family owned.

Abandoning Asterius here would also mean throwing away their obstinacy of desperately coming this far for the Canaria home.

The children of Canaria's home—appealed to misfortunate kids with a gaze saying they would never abandon them.

“.....Hmm. Stubbornness as a human being, huh.”

While Izayoi was surprised that it turned into a quarrel, he sat down on the chair. Even Izayoi didn't think that they would be stubborn to this point. He was told many times, but he once again became self-aware that for him, these two appeared to have remained as a duo of ten year old boy and girl.

In old days, Izayoi stood before the two and took care of their living.

However—Izayoi abandoned his position. Although going to another world was indeed the necessary action from the standpoint of his living, he still abandoned his duty.

So that same person reprimanding these two who were the senior group of

the orphanage and its actual supervisors might have been quite unreasonable.

But even if he was someone who had abandoned his responsibility, he still had to say what he had to say.

“If you are going to say that much, do as you please.....or so I’d like to say, but I have conditions.”

“What is it.”

“What. Even if the opponent is Iza-nii, this Suzuka-san will accept the challenge, you ruffian!”

“That’s not it, and that’s a million years too early for you. —Well, to put it simply. I want an assurance in case this guy starts acting violent in the orphanage. Will you two be able to provide that?”

Izayoi stood up and tapped at the dark window covered by the shadows.

“Homura. If it was you, how would you solve this labyrinth? Will you be able to fight with those monsters with your own power?”

“.....That’s...”

Homura hesitated to speak. It was clear that the Gift he possessed wasn’t battle-oriented.

Regarding the method to suppress it, he more or less already had it in mind. The victory condition, “Erase the lightning, and return the star to its original form” probably meant to change Asterius’ name to Minotaur.

To “return the star to its original form” was that method.

First step would be to cure the disease with Particle Bodies.

Second step would be the return him to the labyrinth that is the royal tomb.

And third step—sitting on the throne of King Minos.

In other words, inheriting the crown.

But if they did that, Asterius would most probably fall into a slumber in this royal tomb once again. ‘Returning the original form’ also contained the meaning of returning the prince to the royal tomb.

However, supposing he didn't take this choice, it would only leave one other method.

“——Defeating the Minotaur, the monster of the labyrinth.”

“So then, can you do it?”

“I can, I think. No, if I couldn't, me being invited to the Sun Authority War wouldn't make sense. That's why, I'm sure that I should be able to use that battleaxe.”

Everyone's gazes gathered in one point. At that place was the battleaxe that held most destructive power among the twelve constellations——“Proto Keraunos” that emitted lightning from its edge.

Certainly, if he was able to handle this Divine Weapon, destroying the labyrinth might also be possible.

Holding his chin with hand, Izayoi began to think, calculating the chances of victory.

“.....Hmmm? Certainly with your Gift you might be able to handle it.”

“Indeed. Compared to the Particle Body research and orphanage accounting, instead it's a simple thing.”

Towards Izayoi's doubt came an immediate reply.

In that case, there was nothing else Izayoi had to ask.

Izayoi who vigorously sat on the chair and crossed his legs announced towards the three with ferocious smile.

“If you say that much, I'll see how you perform. Well then, try your best, chibis.”

We aren't chibis! Homura and Suzuka objected on the spot. Ayato looked at the siblings conversation with envy, but she coughed and gathered the attention to herself.

“It appears the discussion has been settled.”

The three nodded at each other and threw down the gauntlet to the final

battle.

*

Inside of the labyrinth was dominated by silence.

Now that the previous tumult had quieted down, the place was in a slump.

The Chief God and Demigod parent and child fought since the “Man-eating Labyrinth” awakened until the very end, but their circumstances seemed to have changed and they both disappeared from the labyrinth.

What was left was the gigantic Spirit Train and the Bull Monster displaying his giant body at the open area of the throne.

The crowd of ox heads dealt attacks to the train frame until recently, however ever since the Spirit Train was covered by the gigantic shadows, it repelled every physical attack. It seemed that they planned to hold the fort there.

However, it was impossible to hole up there forever.

The chalk Bull Monster stopped the useless attacks, and the ox-headed group gathered around it and turned into a giant lump of rocks. More the time passed, the denser would the chalk Bull Monster grow, and the battle would lean to his advantage.

Meanwhile the monster enhanced his giant body.

At this point, it would easily repel even that Serpens Scorpius Sword Flash.

Looking at his giant build, it was growing so tall that it could be called a tower, however——

Suddenly, he looked up at the sky.

(.....)

The sea breeze blowing from the crevice shook his weak ego.

That wind and that sky——they certainly belonged to the land where Asterius was born and raised.

Currently, Asterius whose consciousness was suspended and his horns broken, had understood everything by becoming one with the royal tomb of the labyrinth.

.....The fact that he suffered from an endemic disease.

.....The fact that he was sacrificed by his father.

.....And the fact that he was later mourned along with the spirits of the sacrificed servants.

Now that he had learned everything, there was nothing else that he desired. It was the providence of the world to return dust to dust, ash to ash and dead to the earth. The young boy who was temporarily given life by the Sun Authority had nothing he could desire.

(.....)

—If he was allowed however.

If he was allowed just one thing, then just once more, he wished to feel the sea breeze blowing from the other side of that crevice on his human skin. Because, while alive, he suffered from the endemic disease, he was isolated for a long time, and in the end, became a sacrifice, his life had curtains fallen without even hearing the sea roar of Crete even in his final moments.

The chalk monster, with a weak ego, had unconsciously extended his hand towards the crevice in the sky.

However no matter how much rocks he piled up, his hand would not reach the crevice.

Because this royal tomb labyrinth was the place he belonged to, this was his country and even the very world itself. No matter how much he longed for it and reached out to it, he would never reach it.

Because, seeing that scenery that he had carved in his heart as a child once more was something that wouldn't come about ever again.

(.....*Are they coming?*)

Shadows surrounding the Spirit Train were released. It seemed they resolved themselves for the final fight.

As he had mostly expected, the first one to jump out was the blond-haired

girl. However there was no sign of anyone following behind her. It seemed that she planned to fight alone.

Her actions were indeed brave, however it was way too reckless. The chalk Monster wasn't crowded by ox-heads anymore, but instead it merged into one gigantic structure that towered over the surroundings from the center of the labyrinth.

That gigantic build measuring to around 330 ft was so big it could be mistaken for a mountain.

With loose movements, he raised up his right hand, and by using those rocks as a base, he projected the weapons of various shapes.

The chalk swords, spears, bows, double-edged axes were fired one after another.

Their number exceeded seventy, and they were thrown at such speed that it created illusions as if it was a machine gun shooting them. If the tender body of a girl took even one of those hits, it would get split open and scatter the lumps of meat everywhere.

However Ayato had her Linked Sword set up and didn't move.

Her eyes strongly displayed her will to intercept them. She became the shield of the Spirit Train, carrying the firm resolution that, from this point on, she wouldn't let even a single attack pass through.

"Fuuh——!"

Fixing her breath, she let out the Serpens Scorpius Sword Flash.

Her alertness was even sharper compared to the one she displayed when she was at the Spirit Train's deck. As she flicked off the double-edged axe that was flying at the front, it clashed with the spears and axes following behind it and fell down.

Thus, it turned into an attack that hit them together, but not all of them could be deflected with that.

However, Ayato accurately perceived the amount of weapons she wasn't able to repel, grasped the incoming spears in reverse and threw them back.

—Just how much one had to polish their martial arts to reach that domain.

The chalk Monster changed his feelings of fear towards her into that of respect. The rampage of numbers wouldn't become a threat to those who have mastered the sword techniques of divine level.

The number of weapons she intercepted quickly crossed fifty, and in the twinkle of an eye, the mountain of arms were piled up near the Spirit Train.

But it wasn't just Ayato protecting the Spirit Train.

Just where in the world did they come from? As one more shadow swooped down from the sky, they released a strong wind all around at random.

It was inevitable that the chalk Bull Monster missed her. She—Ayazato Suzuka was hanging in the sky by jumping high above with consecutive Teleportations in haste.

“I'm going with a big move! Aya-chan take cover!”

“Understood!”

She released the atmosphere gathered in the sky in one go. They mowed down the arms scattered simultaneously at every side.

Accurately manipulating the “Kaitenju” that controlled the fluids was hard, however they weren't as hard to control if they were just fired at random. Moreover, they had the ability to stay in the air as well as had simple destructive power.

They were highly compatible to Suzuka whose strong point was many-sided activity.

The chalk Monster whose every weapon was mowed down had immediately prepared the second wave.

His aim was Ayazato Suzuka floating in the air. He indented to first decrease the number of hands the enemy had but this was obviously a poor plan.

Facing the sky he shot large quantity of weapons towards her.

However Suzuka who saw that coming immediately disappeared with Teleportation.

Damn it! The chalk monster cursed in his mind. Attacking a Teleporter from the front, there was no way they would receive it head on.

In order to oppose the Teleporter, it was necessary to have a different vector Gift rather than weapons or numbers advantage. That's why, fighting would be at a standstill if there was no ability like future sight or a wide area perception ability Gift. That why it was considered to be one of the most difficult to fight abilities even in this Little Garden.

There was a little opening before the next wave of attack. He immediately took a counterattack stance.

However Suzuka remained disappeared without any signs of attacking. Ayato who protected the Spirit Train to the end didn't seem to be stepping forward.

—Could they be devoted to defense? No, they should immediately realize that that would be meaningless. The other side was the very labyrinth itself. Whether they endure it or surpass it, there would be no end to it.

The dodged weapons would also melt into the ground and simply return to the Bull Monster once more.

Then what was their aim. His perception that was specialized for battle instantly grasped every corner of the labyrinth. Then, he immediately perceived that a huge amount of power was being gathered in the Spirit Train.

And it wasn't half-heated power at that. Based on the situation, the lump of power being gathered was of the highest class even among the warriors gathered in the labyrinth. If something like that was used inside the Spirit Train, it would undoubtedly destroy both the Spirit Train and Ayato who was straight above it. He wasn't able to foresee that they would think of such a risky move.

The chalk Monster who instinctively felt impatience faced the Spirit Train with its full power.

However even that was a bit too late. From within the Spirit Train, Saigou Homura screamed out.

“Now! Send me away, Suzuka!”

“Gotcha! I'll leave the rest to you——!!!”

Kudou Ayato's figure vanished in an instant. It seems they planned that from the start.

Instead of her, a single boy appeared before the chalk Monster's eyes.

It was truly before his eyes, at a distance where he would immediately reach him if he were to reach out his hand.

At that point, the Bull Monster finally saw the full picture of the enemy's plan.

Ayato who held the superior ability would harden the defense, and Homura who raised his Spirit Rank and accumulated the power would be sent directly towards the enemy. It was a surprise attack strategy made possible only because Suzuka could use the unique Teleportation.

This control of the Game had been perfectly calculated from start to finish.

(.....)

Understanding that counterattack was futile, the Bull Monster instead put his strength to his eyes.

What Saigou Homura held in hands was "Proto Keraunos".

It was a swing that contained the strongest destructive power among the weapons of the Twelve Constellations that governed the sun. It was a battleaxe that could level mountains and split seas with just one swing.

This weapon, being the prototype of thunder, was able to accumulate the Divine Lightning without limit. Even if there was not much time, if it accumulated enough power for its edge to shine red, it would be able to destroy this level of labyrinth without much trouble.

—*Resolve yourself*, Homura's gaze conveyed to him.

The Bull Monster also accepted everything and looked up at the sky for the final time.

The Mediterranean Sea waves roared far away, even if he reached out for them, his hand was unlikely to ever reach them.

But that was perhaps how it ought to be.

Dust to dust, ash to ash. And dead returning back to earth was but destiny.

The Bull Monster closed his eyes and accepted the Divine Lightning bundled into a thousand.

Only once was the slash swung down, but it already went beyond the concept of a slash. Before even coming in contact with the target, it burned it up, turned it into lava and immediately started to evaporate.

That blow which didn't even leave the chemical elements behind was indeed similar to the genuine lightning of the gods.

The monster of the labyrinth, Minotaur—was reduced to ashes by the lightning brightness which even resembled the stars.



1 殉死者 hard to translate directly, but it's a term that refers to servants who were killed/committed suicide to follow their masters (usually kings and royalty) to their graves. Royal Tomb is called the place where they are buried with their master. ↩

Epilogue

Suddenly, the long missed sea roars tickled the inside of his ears.

That sound, being a vivid reminder of his times as a child when he ran about on the shore, was undeniably the roars of the waves of the Mediterranean Sea. He clearly remembered bustling about along with friends of the same generation under the palm tree while using its leaves' shade to hide from the sun.

Judging from the humidity of the sea breeze it was still the early summer.

The Mediterranean summer had a tendency to dehydrate easily, and it had long been suitable for cultivating olives.

Even if you were playing on the seaside, hunting or harvesting, it was a great season.

Wrapped in the gentle light leaking through the trees, he quietly shed a tear.

Because this warmth——was a little bit too gentle for the after death dream.

(.....)

He slowly opened his eyes. It was a room that was too tidy to be called an abandoned house.

While this house made from chalk stones slightly differed from the ones from the time he lived in, he could see the traces of many years of diligent study put into it.

When he thought that the genealogy that existed in Minoan Civilization of Crete had remained in modern era, he became a little happy.

Listening closely, he could hear the voices of boys and girls coming from the room next door.

“——As one would expect from “Everything Company”. I did not expect them

to give us protection without even asking about anything. It wouldn't be enough no matter how much I pray to Ayato-ojousama."

"Fufu, it wasn't much. But, it's nothing that strange. If the current matter goes well, even within "Everything Company" Senpai might acquire the same level of authority as the company director. Otherwise, it's impossible to neglect the situation like Particle Body researcher being abroad without even a passport. Even Edward Grímnir of Development Department was feeling uneasy about it."

"It might be so in case of Homura, but I'm just his companion to the end!"

Suzuka raised her thumb, her voice being bright for some reason..

Asterius straightened up with a bitter smile on his face, and opened the door leading to the next room.

After confirming his appearance, each of the three greeted him with a different surprise.

"Yo. Is it fine to get up already?"

"No problem.....But this, what's going on? Why am I still manifested? What kind of sorcery did you people use?"

From Asterius who couldn't hide his bewilderment, this time it was Homura and Suzuka's turn to get surprised.

"Oh? It's somehow different from what Iza-nii said. I've heard that if you cleared all of the victory conditions of Gift Games, then you could force the Host into obedience without a need for a dialogue."

"Something like forcibly reviving them even if they died, it really is a Little Garden of Gods, huh. —Don't you feel anything?"

Being pointed out by Homura, he suddenly put his hand to his chest. He could certainly feel something like a link between his current self and Saigou Homura. It appeared that the contract of obedience was in effect even in the outer world.

Seeing Asterius in such a state, Homura smiled widely and put his hands on his waist.

"Fufuh. Well, it's like that. Sorry about it, but we have to participate in this

Sun Authority War from now on. I'll have you cooperate whether you want it or not."

".....I don't really mind that. But will I also be living in the outer world until the final selection?"

"Of course. However I won't give you any free meals. Let's just say you are sixteen years old, I'll have you work in Don Bruno's French food restaurant to earn your living expenses."

He was quite well prepared to have already planned to that extent.

(Why did they save me.....would it be boorish if I asked something like that, I wonder.)

It was also true that he was in need of battle power. However, it appeared that his fundamental reason lied elsewhere.

That was surely a reason of a good-hearted person, one which him who was a Bull Monster wasn't able to understand.

Asterius couldn't help but reveal a bitter smile.

"Well, after this, let's discuss what happens from now on. It's the first order, Asterius."

"This island was your birthplace, right? Even if you want to go for sightseeing, there's not even a guide remaining due to the given recommendation to take refuge. But if you like, we can take you to Knossos Palace?"

Asterius' eyes grew wide out of Surprise from Suzuka's words.

".....Does it still remain? Knossos town, in this era?"

"Rather than just remaining, it's among the top class historic ruins of Bronze Age. I also want to see things like that once in a while to broaden my information.Well, we are staying here perfectly illegally though."

"Now now. This is our hard earned Golden Week, we are allowed that much."

Saying so, Ayato ran towards the door in half-run.

As she opened the door, the brilliant light of the sun filled the room. This house being on high ground made it possible to have an overview of the town

and the chalk townscape filled their view.

—Just for an instant, the scenery of bygone days floated up in his mind.

However that was truly just for an instant.

As expected it appeared to have lost the colors of his native land, and the townscape he once gazed at was vastly different from before. But this was something that couldn't be helped.

Because the period he lived in was counted back to BC.

Would it not be unavailing if the land hadn't evolved even after thousands of years had passed.

".....Even this hill has completely changed."

"Oh, is this a familiar place?"

"Yeah. Knossos Palace also isn't too far from here. It's direction would be——"

The four left their respective houses and started walking. Before long, after finishing their self-introductions, they started heading for the biggest tourist spot of Crete.

They mutually felt that from this point on.....they would be keeping each other company for a long time to come.

*

It wasn't just Homura's group staying on Crete.

Izayoi who was transferred in a similar manner, was trembling from anger all over his body as he gave a small shout.

"Why.....Even though the Spirit Train returned to Little Garden.....Why was it just me that was returned to outer world!!! Isn't this funny now, you rotten Queen!!! What kind of harassment is this!!!"

I bet there's no real meaning behind it, but still!!!

.....He barked indiscriminately. It appears that even he had become desperate.

But as a matter of fact, he understood it. Taking in mind the nature of the

labyrinth, it was natural for Izayoi and others who entered from the gateway to be returned back to Crete.

Tokuteru who also returned full of wounds, and Prith who tended to Gryphon Gry's wounds looked at his state with strained smiles.

"We came all the way to Greece but it was meaningless.....we can't say that for certain either, huh? That we were able to make contact with "Avatära" who are the highest winning candidates is a big feat."

"You say that, Tokuteru. But isn't the requirement for participation for every Player to gather at the time of opening ceremony?"

Prith asked in a curious manner.

Tokuteru shook his head and informed her with serious look.

"That's not it. My prided son appears to be a member of "Avatära"."

".....What! You mean, that Arjuna? Was he the one who injured you?"

"Yeah. He transformed into a young boy in order to earn the entry qualifications, but he's as strong as ever. I got defeated surprisingly fast."

This is troubling, sitting cross-legged, he hit his knee. But the anger from the time he clashed with him couldn't be felt now.

Prith, also being the oldest Divine Spirit felt something in that state of his.

".....I'm surprised. Aren't you quite composed? I thought you would rage even more, you know?"

"Well. Thinking calmly about it, I can easily guess that there was someone that tempted him. The one I should really be angry at is that person. I can scold my foolish son after that."

Tokuteru quietly burned with fighting spirit.

While it was true that he was attached to "Avatära" that was Avatars of Sun as well as the King group, it was certain that "Arjuna" was a guest general and an outsider. When it came to participating in the final selection, one must either have a Sun Authority or be related to the sun itself.

There must definitely be a Sponsor who tempted him from the shadows.

“.....I think it would be better for us Twelve Guardian Devas to gather up and have a meeting once before the opening ceremony. There’s also those who are taking part in the final selection.”

“Huh?”

Izayoi didn’t believe his ears from what Tokuteru said.

“Oi, wait a minute. Twelve Guardian Devas are the Heavenly Army, aren’t they? Aren’t you guys the Sponsors?”

“No, it’s not us. Kuro Usagi seems to be participating as a judge though. Those who manage Games and establish the rules are only the previous winner and the community designated by them.Well, you’ll know when you attend the opening ceremony. Rather than that, what are you going to do before then?”

From Tokuteru’s question, Izayoi was at a loss for words.

As expected, he thought someone would pick him up when the opening ceremony started, but at the moment Izayoi was one penniless young man excluding the fact that he was remaining in the family register. While it wasn’t hard for him to live even with that in mind, he didn’t have self-confidence to live until the opening ceremony without causing trouble.

That being the case, there was just one course of action remaining.

“Ah.....Mr. President over there. Does the Shibamata Taishakuten company have a room to employ one guy and one Gryphon?”

『Mu, me too, huh? I’m also fine with spending time until the ceremony in some forest.....』

“Don’t say stupid things. What will you do if a Gryphon like you gets spotted by some brat? They wouldn’t be able to sleep at night due to excitement, would boast about it everywhere and finally would be made fun of as a braggart and become a target of bullying, all of that would come as a set. Are you still fine with it? It wouldn’t be good, would it?”

『Mu-Mumu.....!』

The Gryphon became worried over Izayoi’s super-hypothesis, but it wasn’t

like it had no persuasiveness in it. Even though the scales were different, it was not like that never happened in Little Garden either. There's also the example of 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf'.

Tokuteru accepted Izayoi's proposal while smiling broadly.

"Sounds fine. Other employs also became curious after hearing rumors about you. Also, my company is based on piecework payment, so you are paid according to the work you do."

".....I see. So that's why Prith is rich and the president has holes in his purse."

Being poked in a sore spot Mikado quickly turned his gaze away, while Prith puffed her chest with pride.

When the company in question is managed by the Twelve Guardian Devas, there would surely appear quite outrageous jobs to do.

There was still quite a while before the opening ceremony.

Izayoi floated a wry smile as it appeared that he wouldn't be bored until then.

*

—In the middle of them returning home, as they aimed to leave Crete.

Inside the large plane of "Everything Company" Homura suddenly recalled the words Queen and Scathach had said to him.

"—When the battle ends you will quickly understand the reward contents."

He certainly remembered that those words contained such a nuance in them.

As soon as the game was over, they were quite concerned about any troubles that may be pushed upon them, but as the final day of the Golden Week approached, all thoughts about their rewards and such completely left their minds, and they fully enjoyed their vacation on the island of the Mediterranean filled with the aroma of early summer.

Or perhaps, this absurd situation where they could do completely as they pleased on this island of the Mediterranean Sea, empty after the evacuation

advisory, was in itself the reward, Homura had concluded to himself.

He didn't have a good impression of the Golden Week as some kind of trouble appeared every year, however a fun thing like exploring the island like this with the kids from the same generation, and playing around at beach, was an event that never happened in Homura's life before.

Although the sea for the first time in a few years was somewhat cold, thanks to the luck of being blessed with a clear weather, it made possible to swim at daytime.

.....Asterius being with them was probably a good luck. For Homura who belonged to the indoor faction, playing around at beach with the girl from the same generation was more high hurdled than he imagined. Speaking specifically, he was troubled where to look. As expected of a German person, her body development was amazing.

Carrying such pleasant memories in heart, Saigou Homura and others met their final day there, and they proceeded to play games appropriate to their age even inside the plane. Asterius who had a special background of being a person from BC era, had rioted quite a bit when the plane took off, but after they went above the clouds he burned into his mind the sight of the Mediterranean Sea visible from the sky.

Asterius appeared to have gained the fundamental knowledge about games and they passed time playing poker and simple board games.

But only Homura was summoned into the inner VIP room.

“.....Development Manager? Of “Everything Company”?”

“Yes. It seems he really wants to meet with Senpai and talk about something.....”

Homura stood up and walked to the door leading to the special room.

Well, if the other person was someone with the position of Development Manager, he wouldn't mind meeting them once. That person would also find it difficult to communicate from now on without even knowing Homura's face.

It was instead unnatural that he was someone who he never had the chance to meet before.

.....Next, He would open the door and find Queen inside.

He slightly expected such a conventional outcome, however it appeared there was no such amusing development.

The one inside were the top of the 3rd university department Laboratory—aliased, 3rd Research Center, lab manager Carla Grímnir and the person claiming to be her older brother.

“.....Ah. So you are Saigou Homura?”

It was a man with an arrogant attitude, leaning on the sofa with his legs crossed.

Lab manager Carla who was next to him responded with a playful smile.

“Oh my, you’ve gotten quite burned by the sun, Homura-kun. Being together with the student council president and Ojousama, you’ve had a beauty on each arm, didn’t you! As the lab manager I’m quite worried about what kind of time you have spent there!”

“There was nothing like what you are imagining.By the way, is this person the Manager of Development Department?”

“Yes. This is my brother, Edward Grímnir. He has a little difficult personality, but I hope you can get along with him.”

Homura switched his gaze to the Dev. Head.

Man with chestnut hair and glasses—It appeared that he was the Dev. Head, Edward Grímnir.

The beauty with curly, blond hair next to him was the lab manager Carla, but they didn’t appear like siblings in any way. Or perhaps they weren’t connected by blood. Carla was obviously a woman with 100% pure Germanic features and blond hair as characteristics. She had a gentle smile, figure with smooth curves, and moreover was a sociable perfect beauty.

Compared to her, this man was indeed dressed in style—but it somehow felt that his current appearance was different from his natural one.

(.....What am I even thinking.)

It appears that his common sense was shaken up after going to another world a little while ago.

Shaking his head with a wry smile, Homura did a self-introduction.

“Nice to meet you, Edward-san. I’m Saigou Homura, the Particle Body researcher at Houei institute 3rd research center.”

“Hm, aren’t you quite courteous. It’s as if you are using a fixed self-introduction. With such a greeting, it somewhat lacks the appeal.”

Without even introducing himself, Edward looked uninterestedly at Homura while still sitting cross-legged. As expected, he got slightly irritated at his attitude, but he was used to this gaze.

At Homura’s age, it was normally impossible to be doing activities at the forefront of the laboratory. There were many cases where he was faced with such an attitude and was ostracized out of jealousy.

—But it was slightly different with this person.

Rather than jealousy, he directed a gaze that said he had no interest in him, and then he uninterestedly threw a nearby envelope on the table.

Fifty

“Let’s leave out haggling and flatteries. We are Equal from the standpoint of performing business.”

“.....I don’t think that’s the attitude of equality, but got it. So, what’s your business?”

“I was told explain the conclusion of the current matter to you. The virus that “Bull of Heaven”—The calamity publicly called as Typhoon #link24, has spread throughout the world is unexpectedly serious. Our company’s Particle Bodies are to be appointed to control the situation. Is there anything you have to ask regarding this?”

Homura’s eyebrow twitched.

While saying that “He came to explain” he asked whether “He had any questions”.

It was logical at a glance, but reality was the exact opposite. This was the exchange to find out what Homura himself thought and what he noticed with his own eyes.

Saying it frankly, this man came to appraise him.

The youth called Saigou Homura who researched the Star Particle Bodies.

(It would be fine to just ignore it.....but I feel uneasy.)

For what reason did this man come here. And why did he say something that was like testing him. It might not be bad to lightly test the waters just to investigate those reasons.

After holding on his reply for a bit, Homura sat down on the Sofa and continued.

“Questions.....huh? In that case, I’ll ask without reserve.”

“Go ahead.”

“I’ll ask without beating around the bush—Is there a chance that the current matter was entirely self-directed by “Everything Company?”

Uwao! Lab manager Carla raised a strange voice. She was a cheerful girl, but she probably thought that it wasn’t a good thing to say, as expected. Dev. Head Edward also opened his eyes wide.

Raising the corners of his mouth just a bit, he narrowed down his eyes and looked at Homura.

“I see. Let’s hear your reasons.”

“Oh? So you aren’t going to deny that it is a man-made incident.”

“It seems there’s a need to explain it from there. I believe I said it. We are equal. You asked that to me while only having doubt as argument, right? In that case, you should have your say first.”

Is that so? He shrugged and continued ahead.

“There’s nothing that could be called grounds for argument. —Well, it’s a strange reason that the one who would profit the most out of this matter is “Everything Company”.And so, when I thought about what was the goal of

this incident, the first two things that popped up were “Rise of Star Particle Body fame” and “Acquisition of international authority”.”

“I see. Continue.”

“Making such a big appeal that it is a man-made incident by purposely crossing the Equator, is for the sake of demonstrating how dangerous this research is, and to link it to the propaganda of the final goal. When it comes to talking about building a breakwater somewhere so as not to cause the same weather incident, the first thing that would be proposed is, after all, the equator line which is blessed with a universal climate all the year round. Errr, then I remembered at that point. The topic that Ayato’s father talked about quite long ago.”

“The “Environmental Control Tower” project, right?”

“Yes. Constructing a huge tower to spread the Star Particle Bodies and improve the planet’s environment such as global warming, desertification, air pollution and so on, as well as to control the drought damage or calamities like typhoon and earthquakes. If all these became possible, then humanity would dominate the whole planet in its true meaning.”

Isn’t it a dreamy story? Homura took a break at that. Until this matter came to light, Homura truly believed that the “Environmental Control Tower” project was impossible to realize.

But with the appearance of the current “Bull of Heaven”, the situation underwent a big change.

“.....That said, I don’t think that all of the “Everything Company” was involved in the matter. Besides, “Bull of Heaven” is a product that is three levels more advanced compared to our research. I’m sure there were external hands at play. Was the information leaked.....Was there a thesis that I’m not aware of.....Or is there an organization completely unrelated to it? That much is something I don’t know.”

Therefore, Homura cut straight to the point. He still couldn’t decide on whether he could put his trust on Queen or on her close aide. The only people he trusted from the bottom of his heart were Suzuka, Ayato, and also Izayoi and Tokuteru.

Was this man a friend or foe. He wanted to ascertain that at this place.

Edward intended to appraise him, but being asked whether it was true or false in reverse, he revealed a faint smile.

Perhaps he got interested as he slightly brightened his voice and asked.

“What if “Everything Company” was the main culprit?”

“Then I would fight you. While researching Particle Bodies. In order to not let anyone abuse this research.”

“As a deterrent, huh? —Very well. Then what if the main culprit was someone else, the enemy beyond your imagination? What if it was a crime committed with countries involved?”

Bending forward, Edward cast aside his overbearing atmosphere and asked.

His listless appearance from before vanished like a mist and he looked at him with serious eyes.

Without faltering, Homura returned the blow.

“Even so—I would fight.”

“You are reckless. What is the reason for that? Is that a stubbornness as a researcher?”

“No. It’s my stubbornness as a human being.”

The man unable to endure it, burst out in laughter.

He bend body into a < shape, and held his sides and laughed off Homura’s resolve in front of the person himself.

While it was an extremely rude thing to do, Homura didn’t show signs to remove his serious attitude.

It’s expected that from the current matter alone, the victims would exceed from several million to maybe even ten million people. There were people who wounded that many people and destroyed their livelihood.

—That’s right. There was an enemy.

The full portrait was unclear and the truth was still on the other side of the

mist. Presently, he couldn't even step on their shadows.

Even so, there definitely was an irreconcilable enemy that wished for that level of large-scale destruction. In that case, even if he lacked in years, it was not a reason to avoid fighting.

Perhaps he also thought that he was too rude. While directing an even more amused line of sight than before towards Homura, Edward Grímnir told him.

"Hah!.....For a young child——To choose "Human Stubbornness" out of all things as the reason to fight! This is priceless, priceless I say! If he was such an amusing kid, you should've invited him sooner, Carla!"

"Eeh? Wasn't it you, Edward, who was being sulky until some time ago and didn't waver no matter what I said?"

"Well, that couldn't be helped. Even I would become sulky if I lose someone I respected and loved."

Kukuku, The two suppressed their laughs.

Suddenly, Homura wondered how the lab manager of the 3rd Research Center could expose such a wicked laugh but he quickly focused his mind and switched over to something else.

"Edward-san. Lab manager Carla. Since you've dropped all pretenses up to this point, please answer my question seriously. Are you.....my enemies?"

"Of course not. Be at peace, Homura-kun. "Everything Company" is innocent. We can guarantee you about that. Well, that is if you could believe in us."

Edward picked up the envelope that he threw away before and took out the documents.

"Sorry about before. I was also judging whether you were friend or foe. But it became clear with previous dialogue. We shall become your allies."

".....? What do you mean by become my allies?"

"Never mind, you will know in time. If you have something you are troubled with, say it without reserve. We shall lend you a hand without fail. Your and our enemies, are fortunately one and the same. Let's talk about that some other time. For now, let's talk about your sweet reward, shall we?"

“.....O-Okay.”

Due to his sudden change in attitude, Homura couldn't get his answers. It appeared that he was seriously enjoying it, however he still couldn't be negligent.

However, glancing back at Homura who was in such a state, Edward fetched the documents from the envelope.

“I will also speak without reserve. “Environmental Control Tower” project had shifted to action behind the scenes since long ago. It's no doubt that the current matter served as a booster. I can understand your feelings of doubting “Everything Company”. Because our company is also in the middle of searching for the traitor.”

“To be even more blunt, Homura-kun who disappeared was the top ranker among the traitor list!”

From Carla's smile, Homura felt chills go down his spine. There's also the matter of him taking out the “Origin”, so it couldn't be helped that he was suspected given the situation.

“However, with Ayato-Ojousama also putting a word in, that suspicion was 90% cleared. Discerning the remaining 10% was left to us. Only when we judged that we could trust you, we were supposed to hand out these documents—the documents related to the interests of the Star Particle Bodies.”

“.....Interests?”

“Rights, you know, rights! Saying it bluntly, it's money! From now on, Homura-kun can acquire 0.75% of the profits earned by Star Particle Bodies!”

As Carla told him in cheerful manner, this time it was Homura who became wide eyed and stood up.

“0.75% of p-profit!? Is that true!? That would be astronomical amount of money, you know!!?”

“Yes. This is also means to tie you down.....and also because you are quite liked by the president and his wife. You could say it's a reward loaded with

various expectations.”

Edward revealed an unpleasant smile and told him. However, the person concerned didn't care about that now. Homura simply calculated the yearly reward that could be earned from the interests and he almost became dizzy.

Even at the present stage where they were one-sidedly directed into medical treatment, they would earn from hundreds of millions to billions in one year. If the Star Particle Bodies were completed, that number would be raised many-fold.

If that much money would be paid in a period of year, the orphanage management would also stabilize. On the contrary, he would be able to reconstruct it or add more buildings as much as he pleased. He wouldn't have to worry about the large TV anymore.

The two who were looking amusedly at him who became dizzy from the amount of money, talked about the hereafter plans while handing over the documents.

“To roughly say about “Environmental Control Tower”, it's close to your guess. I think it would be a talk of a distant future, but in the end, it would be decided to be constructed on the Equator line.”

“At present, there are twenty four places as candidates. Please look over that as well.”

Then, Homura suddenly came to his senses.

“—On the Equator line, twenty four places?”

“That's right, something wrong?”

“N-No.”

He shook his head and replied ambiguously.

But Homura couldn't help remembering the incident that happened in Little Garden.

(.....Game of competing with twenty four Sun Authorities. Don't tell me..... its reward is.....)

Examining the interest papers, Homura gulped his saliva. If Homura's thinking was correct, then there might be some kind of close relation to the Authority War and this interest.

Grasping the papers tightly, Homura exhaled greatly.

It was a realistic reward, but if he could receive this level of thing——

(L.....Let's do this.....!!!)

Homura suddenly made a fist with his eyes shining like a kid.

Although it was a naive expectation, right now he was allowed that much.

Because the fact that this would later develop into a battle that would greatly warp the entire world——was still something of a distant future.

Afterwords

It's been a while, everyone. It's Tatsunoko Tarou. It has been half year, huh. The summer has passed and it became crazy cold. I can't even think of what to write in the Afterword, it's terrible.

In previous volume I wrote that there would be adventures, but it wasn't so adventurous, eh? Someone might retort, but for this Tatsunoko Tarou who pushed on with force, impulse and willpower, it would be no exaggeration to say that going to another world, fighting, playing games and boarding a train was already quite adventurous!

.....Umu, it's alright. There will be adventures from now on, so no problem.

Please expect the new volume of this Tatsunoko-sensei!

That said, just what does adventure and action actually mean, lately I've been thinking about it. Speaking of adventures, the most memorable for me are the likes of the Sega Saturn game "Grandia"! Although the one I played was the PS version! After all, PS is better than Sega, and Dreamcast is better than PS!

I have nothing to write in afterword so I'll just advertise the old game in narrative style, damnit!

"Grandia"—Staged in a world divided by the gigantic walls called "The World's Edge", an adventure action where the protagonist is employed as "Adventurer" and revolves visits various historic ruins. Finally, at the end of their adventure, the protagonists learn that the World's Edge was merely a lie, and they challenge the "World Walls" that no one has crossed before.

.....Umu, hmm, but I've written this much already you know? Just by writing the summary I fully realize its impact, no seriously. Little Garden that was introduced in Mondaiji Series was also set up as 'the City of Little Garden, city enclosed by walls' at first, however it was too shameful to have the Edge of the World which covered the entire world be nothing more than an obvious piece

of design like a wall. Therefore I edited in the “Edge of the World”, Tritonis Great Waterfall from the First Volume into it.

However, ‘Worldview takes priority’ type of composition is quite difficult to follow with plot, and in the beginning I was told that “From the choice of characters priority or worldview priority, the former is definitely a better way to go for LNs” so I didn’t follow through it.

When the plan of “If you still want to write it, then you have no choice but to take on the absurd challenge of writing the text without advancing the plot!” wasn’t going so well but still sent one volume away, the editor of that time replied with “It’s interesting so let’s proceed like this, baby!!”, and as a result I stepped across the Edge of the World and arrived this far.

.....Fuh. Thinking back, it’s been quite the road i have walked down.

Damn, there’ll be pages left.

Let’s just leave heaps of spaces and talk a little about the 2nd vol of Last Embryo.

Words like “Eh?” might’ve appeared among the readers of the 2nd volume. I believe I talked about it before, but originally, this “Mondaiji Series” is a story that the story written by me, Tatsunoko Tarou intersects three-dimensionally. It’s an old tale, counting back nearly ten years. My winning work “EQUATION” still hasn’t appeared in public! I want to write short stories like Dystopia Arc, Jack the Ripper arc, but this Tarou knows very well how slow Tatsunoko’s writing speed is! That being the case, bit by bit, the Last Embryo volume 2 cleared up the worldview that I have messed up before. For the long-time fans, most of the mystery might have been cleared up with current volume, I’m slightly regretful as I think so. As for the new fans, I would be glad if you enjoy the world mysteries that would come to light from this point on.

Next volume will come out after somewhere from four to six months (Probably)! For details, follow the Kadokawa Sneaker Bunko Twitter that give out the fastest information, and you will also be able to get some special information, you know?”

Okay! Afterword quota achieved!

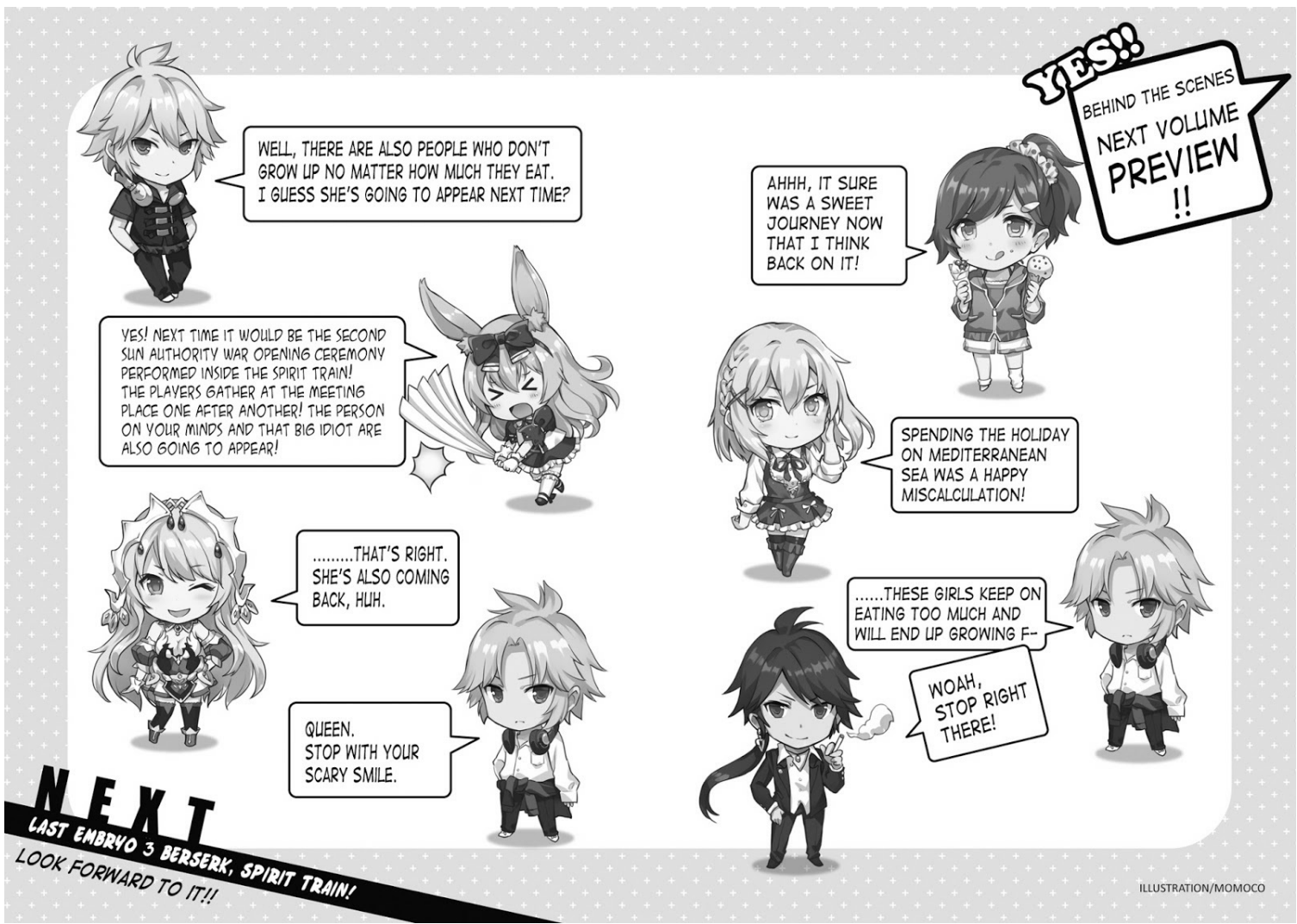
To Momoco-sensei who once again drew wonderful illustrations.

To Editor O-san who worked more than ● days for this volume (Seriously sorry about that).

To everyone else who supported me with releasing this volume.

And also, to everyone who has read this 2nd volume of Last Embryo, I give you my thanks.

Tatsunoko Tarou









Last Embryo - Volume 02

The Second Coming of Avatara

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Translated by **Homura, Frozen & Eclipse9**

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[Frozen's Lazy Blog](#)

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